SERMONS

UPON THE FOLLOWING

SUBJECTS,

I. All the works of God, in their natural ſtate, beautiful and lovely, &c.

II. To be filled with the fulneſs of God, explained and illuſtrated.

III. The neceſſity of giving the heart to wiſdom; the power the mind has over its affections, &c.

IV. The great ſimilarity of the individuals in the conſtituent and moſt valuable parts of human nature.

V. & VI. Moral perfection, the higheſt end and chief good of man, attainable by all; and the means of attaining it.

VII. What is imported in glorifying God, and in what ſenſe the glory of God is to be the end of our actions.

VIII. The ſcripture doctrine of the mediation of Chriſt explained.

IX. What the ſentiments of angels concerning our preſent ſtate may be ſuppoſed to be.

X. The cares of human life, how far they ſhall ceaſe in a future ſtate.

XI. That the preſent ſtate has a plain reference to a future inviſible one.

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XIV. & XV. Our abſolute dependence on God; with practical reflections.

XVI. What is imported in keeping the heart, and the beſt means of doing it.

By the late Rev. JAMES DUCHAL, D.D.

THE SECOND EDITION.

VOL. II.

To which is prefixed,

An ESSAY on the CHARACTER of the AUTHOR.

LONDON:

Printed for W. JOHNSTON, in Ludgate-Street.

MDCCLXV.

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A LETTER TO A FRIEND, &c.

---Quique ſacerdotes caſti, dum vita manebat.---

I DO not, my friend, call into queſtion the general utility of biographical writing: On the contrary, eminent and exemplary virtue diſplayed in its true colours, by a maſterly hand, one would think ſhould be uncommonly entertaining, as well as tend to produce many good effects. Much leſs do I object to the original, of which you deſire a copy: It is alſo one which I had acceſs to know intimately, and held in the higheſt

eſteem; ſo that no man would be mor warmly zealous to do honour to the memory of our late friend Dr. *Duchal*, did power always follow inclination. However, ſeveral other difficulties occur, in ſuch an attempt; ſome of which, perhaps, may not improperly find a place, in the entrance of this letter, which I do not yet foreſee can run into any great length; but even ſhould it happen to equal the extent of a modern ſermon, ſtill it will fall ſhort of many modern epiſtles, to a friend, and through him, to the public. Poſſibly too, ſome hints may be thrown out, not unuſeful to other unpractiſed adventurers in this way of writing, (or, it may be, as your friend, preſſed into the ſervice) who might otherwiſe, in circumſtances like the preſent, not find it eaſy to ſpread out ſcanty matter, without any continued thread of narration to work along.

It were indeed to be wiſhed that a fair hearing could be procured for obſcure and humble worth; where more is meant than commonly meets the ear, and eye: But it is no eaſy matter to bring out to light the hidden graces of the heart; even the lines of a fine and delicate face are not eaſily hit off. Simplicity of manners, diſciplined paſſions, moving in a ſort of ſtill life, and in a narrow

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ſphere, are not glaring enough to attract the popular eye. As few have the powers to expreſs, perhaps, not many have taſte to diſcern the mild and retired beauties. Yet the humble virtues are moſt truly ſuch; they are moſt uſeful in common life; all are called to the practice of them; and they are moſt imitable. Few are born to figure on the public ſtage; and it is often ſeen that rude undiſciplined abilities, and paſſions, moſt ſtrongly rouze attention; for nature's ſhoots are moſt luxuriant. Such characters are generally ſtruck off at a heat, from the colliſion of ſtrong powers, and fortunate conjunctures. And, at beſt, mere elevation of place, boldneſs of ſpirit, and force of genius, produce themſelves into light, rather as objects of undiſcerning applauſe, than of imitation. Indeed, characters of this caſt often produce a very bad effect: the moral eye is dazzled by the falſe luſtre of ſpecious qualities; not to ſay, by flagrant enormities, dreſſed out in the ſpoils of virtue; thus debauching the ſenſe of right, and proſtituting the rewards of true worth to the ſervice of vice---*Decipit exemplar vitiis imitabile:* And thus, modeſt retired virtue, in the vale of life, is ſtill more obſcured by the ſplendor of folly in high place. Such virtue may indeed reſemble the

dawning light, which ſhines more and more to the fullneſs of day; but from thoſe whoſe ſenſes are not exerciſed to diſcern, it will attract little regard; ſhedding only a mild and gentle ray, amidſt the ſhades of obſcurity. The ſhewy, the ſuperficial, the glaring, have always, and ſtill will draw the many to wonder: In truth, many are the miſhapen and miſchievous beaſts, the world has wondered after; while the plain, the ſolid, the natural, lie little noticed. For theſe Fame ſeldom ſounds her trumpet: However, ſhe is too puiſſant a perſonage to be arreſted in her courſe by us: Common fame ſounds, and common ſenſe is ſilent: And, in the preſent ſtate of things, there may poſſibly be more reaſons for this, than our philoſophy wots of.

Now, my friend, in ſo hopeleſs a caſe, were it not the wiſer way, to let every man's own works praiſe him? If, for inſtance, his friends produce him as a writer; why, let the impartial public reward him, according to ſuch his works. What need of ſuſpected panegyric? and not unjuſtly ſuſpected, in modern practice; for what happens? An admired friend is no more; when, inſtantly, fond affection ſnatches up the pencil, and all is one blaze of light, with ſcarce a ſhade, or variety of lines,

to give diſtinction. But ſurely, thus to mix up almoſt all the virtues, and in the higheſt degree, with ſcarce one trace of defect, or human infirmity, is neither to draw, nor colour after the life. This is not to give the portrait of a man, but the poet's *perfect monſter, which the world never ſaw*; or, on the contrary, if malevolence conduct the work, the Roman ſatiriſt's ſtill more enormous monſter, *redeemed from vice by no one virtue.* Credulity itſelf will revolt at ſuch outrage againſt all truth of character; as beyond the powers of humanity, either to exemplify, or to imitate. Doubt will either queſtion the exiſtence of the perfect pattern; or, looking up to ſuch ſublime heights of virtue, will ſtrain the powers; and deſpair of attainment will extinguiſh all ardour of imitation. There appears to be a natural tone of the powers, beyond which the purſuit of virtue itſelf may incur the imputation of folly. For truth's ſake then, and for example's ſake, it were better not ſet the mark to be aimed at, too far out of reach. It ſeems ſafer for each perſon, without violent efforts, to hold on the even tenour of his own way; in the poet's manner, addreſſing his fellow-candidates, *Quod ſi ceſſas, aut ſtrenuus anteis, nec tardum operior, nec præcedentibus inſto.*

But it may be ſaid, what ſhould diſcourage, or rather not provoke emulation, in a life of eaſy, modeſt, unaffected goodneſs; and acting in an humble private ſtation? Should not parity of circumſtances, and apparently equal advantages, with thoſe who, by a patient continuance in well-doing, have already finiſhed their courſe, naturally ſtimulate others to ſtrain every nerve in the race of virtue? more eſpecially, as the ſame immortal wreath of glory ſhall crown equal ardour, and perſeverance, though with unequal powers. Be it ſo: Still here is the difficulty, like our late friend, to hold on this ſame unremitting tenour of virtue, ſtedfaſt to the end---unſeduced, like him, by the allurements of ſight and ſenſe; by temptations from within, and from without: by the current of faſhion and example; unſwayed by popular opinion, and the falſe maxims of the many; unterrified too, to encounter difficulties, dangers, pains, loſſes, and even obloquy and reproach, in ſupport of the cauſe of truth and goodneſs---unſeen, unapplauded, unreluctant, to ſubmit to ſevere trials of virtue, of ſelf-diſcipline, and ſelf-denial, for the teſtimony of a good conſcience, and the approbation of the Supreme Judge of merit! No doubt, an approving heart, and the atteſtation of him who is

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greater than the heart, is the nobleſt reward of virtue, far beyond the acclaim of men and angels: But, is it eaſy thus not to conſult with fleſh and blood; with unwearied patience to continue ſtedfaſt and immoveable; to live not by ſight, but by faith? Is not this true heroiſm, in whatever condition of life? Does it not approach to the ſummit of Chriſtian perfection? It ſurely ſuppoſes the fulleſt conviction of all the leading principles of religion; the warmeſt attachment of heart to them; and an invincible firmneſs of ſpirit. Such is the hidden man of the heart; ſuch is modeſt retired worth! Beſides, ſuch worth is often aſſociated with a ſtate of life, with circumſtances which depreſs and obſcure it; it naturally courts retirement; careleſs, perhaps impatient of applauſe. Why then obtrude it on the public eye; or draw it into the common haunts of men?---of men, either loſt in a whirl of vanity, or engroſſed by the more ſpecious purſuits of life?

Such, however, it muſt yet be owned, is the force of genuine goodneſs, that, where there is any ſenſibility remaining, any thing uniſon to it in the mind of the obſerver, it will command reſpect. Even the retainers to vice, if not quite loſt to the ingenuous ſentiments of nature, do homage to it. Let

but the living form of undiſſembled goodneſs arreſt the attention of the gay, the diſſipated, the pleaſurable; and they will, for the time, revere it: Surely, a very unexceptionable teſtimony in its favour. After all, whatever declaimers may ſuggeſt of times and manners, they are not yet ſo degenerate, as that true wiſdom need ſhun all the reſorts of men, or fear an ill reception. Of this our friend was a remarkable inſtance: whoſe modeſt unaſſuming worth attracted the eſteem of perſons of rank, and figure in life; a diſtinction which did no leſs honour to thoſe who conferred, than to him who received it. How is it then, that thoſe who ſhould ſtand foremoſt in the train of virtue, are ſo much baniſhed from the commerce of the faſhionable world? On the one hand, grimace, and an illiberal forbidding manner has belied the fair form of virtue: On the other, levity, and an unreſiſting ſuppleneſs, which may be molded into any ſhape, is an extreme, perhaps, of worſe conſequence to religion; as it approaches to libertiniſm; is more expoſed to view; and in characters ſet up as examples to others. Be both theſe extremes avoided; let virtue aſſume her own native form, her eaſy graceful dignity of manner; and all will be well. But of this, perhaps,

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ſomething too much; as it may not be thought a text fit for lay-handling.

It is in itſelf, and to my purpoſe, far more agreeable, to contemplate our late friend, as a fair pattern of the golden mean above-mentioned. And I ſhall be much pleaſed to find you, and other judges in this moral painting, who knew the original, recognizing the reſemblance, though but imperfect, between it and this unfiniſhed ſketch. How ſweetly united in him, the ſoft, the gentle, the ſympathetic; with the firm, the grave, and the manly? and ſure it is no mean point of wiſdom, to harmonize theſe often jarring elements. To win one's way to the heart, for honeſt purpoſes; by mild addreſs and the arts of perſuaſion, hiding the authority of the adviſer, in the kind remonſtrances of the friend, was eminently his talent. Indeed his natural modeſty and reſerve, perhaps to an exceſs, ſeldom aſſumed the ſeverity of rebuke, unleſs extorted in vindication of truth and right; when he never failed to exert himſelf, *Virtutis veræ cuſtos rigiduſque ſatelles*; incapable, from cowardice, or mean views, to deſert the poſt of virtue; or, where the ſtill voice of reaſon could be heard, of adding even the ſanction of ſilence to what he thought was wrong.

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Particular characters appear eminently diſtinguiſhed by particular virtues and talents: the condition of human life requires it ſo. Natural complexion, habit, education, profeſſion, many complicated circumſtances, bring out, with various degrees of ſtrength, the various powers of head and heart: through all theſe, the original caſt of genius will predominate: however ductile to proper culture, and capable of aſſuming various forms, ſtill the ruling principle will ſtrongly mark the general character. See how endleſsly the human face is diverſified, by the combination of a few ſimple elements! while, in a general ſameneſs, ſome prominent ſtriking turn of feature ſtamps the peculiar character of countenance. Now, it is the ſeizing this characteriſtic diſtinctive mark, and producing it to light, which reflects the true image of the individual: This omitted, or unſkilfully taken off, the particular man is loſt, in the vague reſemblance of the ſpecies at large. However, this individuating principle itſelf, is not always obvious: it may not be called out by any correſponding ſcene of action; it may go on to operate uniformly, through a ſtill recurring ſameneſs of life; like an equable motion proceeding from the ſame continued impulſe: This is often the caſe in a private ſta-

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tion; where the ſame offices proceed in the ſame tenour; and yeſterday, to-day, and to-morrow, are of the ſame colour. The whole piece may be excellent: the character, ſo ſituated, may exemplify the moſt uſeful, the moſt amiable virtues; the virtues of the good citizen, of the faithful friend, of the eminently pious, diligent, and ſkilful teacher of religion.

How applicable is all this to the author of the following diſcourſes? How intirely devoted, his life, to the zealous diſcharge of the duties of his profeſſion, thoſe who knew him beſt can witneſs---The whole man, his ſoul, his heart, was in his buſineſs, as a miniſter of the Chriſtian religion! Warm and unbiaſſed in his attachment to the cauſe of truth, and liberty; to promote theſe was devoted a ſpirit of reſearch, manly and liberal; and which, no very common appearance perhaps, grew with his growing years. He was utterly averſe from that imperious, narrow, bigotted ſpirit, which has wrought ſuch mighty miſchief in the chriſtian world; to the reproach of religion itſelf; and which one knows not whether it has more debaſed the underſtanding, or corrupted the principles and affections of the human heart. It was from a deep conviction of the great truths of religion,

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a conviction, the reſult of moſt impartial inquiry; from the powers of Chriſtianity ſtrongly felt; from a heart penetrated with a ſenſe of duty in diſcharging the offices of the ſacred function, and the honour of approving his zeal and fidelity to his Lord and Maſter---From theſe, was his conduct animated to ſuch unwearied diligence; hence was he inſtant in ſeaſon, out of ſeaſon, fervent in ſpirit, ſerving his God.

Indeed, *an indefatigable induſtry* appears to have been a peculiar diſtinction of this excellent man; and a moſt important diſtinction it is! For it will be found, that in the various offices of life, we fall ſhort, not ſo much for want of talents, as from indolence and want of activity. We readily ſeem to yield the preeminence, in point of ability, to the perſon who far excels us in moral and religious attainments: little perhaps ſuſpecting, that our ſloth and want of exertion are then obliquely making their own apology. You know it was an eſſential article in the character of an eminent Roman, that he was, *vir induſtrius*, an induſtrious man: And I am perſuaded it will be found, that ſuperior eminence is oftener the fruit of this plain virtue, than of ſuperior abilities. However, ſucceſsful induſtry ſuppoſes the powers, and energy of mind, properly

perly pointed to the courſe of life; as well as unbiaſſed, and unobſtructed, by the counterworking of oppoſite forces--Hence the apoſtolic precept, of laying aſide every weight, and the ſin that moſt eaſily beſets us.

But, in proof of our friend's moſt exemplary induſtry, a point highly deſerving particular notice, as in a great meaſure imitable by all, and productive of the beſt effects; let it be conſidered, that after a vigorous application, in early youth, to fit himſelf for that reputable courſe of life he had choſen; and after having made honourable progreſs in it, acquitting himſelf of all its duties, with moſt conſcientious zeal--at the ſame time, by diligent ſtudy, and a ſingular patience of labour, which is a capital point, having laid up not only an uncommon ſtock of uſeful knowledge and learning; but, which is a more immediate neceſſary of theological life, of ſermons alſo; one may ſay, more than ſufficient to have equipped moſt modern Divines for life --Yet, all this notwithſtanding, on being choſen to ſucceed the late Mr. *Abernethy*, in the proteſtant diſſenting congregation of *Wood-ſtreet*, *Dublin*; * though now paſt the meri-

* On Mr. *Abernethy*'s removal from *Antrim*, our author alſo had ſucceeded him in that place; where the memory of both will be long and deſervedly revered.

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dian of life, of a valetudinary habit of body, and in circumſtances which, from change of place, might have tempted the love of eaſe to abate the ardor of application---He, on the contrary, began, as it were, his career anew; not availing himſelf of the rich treaſure before laid up, in the way of writing; but forgetting, as St. *Paul* ſpeaks, the things that were behind, he alſo preſſed forward for the prize that awaits a patient continuance in well-doing: Inſomuch that, amidſt daily avocations, during a courſe of twenty years, which he ſurvived from his firſt ſettlement in *Dublin*, he compoſed and wrote ſermons, to an amount almoſt beyond belief; perhaps ſcarcely to be paralleled; more it appears on the beſt computation, than ſeven hundred. So ſtriking an inſtance, ſo late in life, of renewed, one may ſay, of obſtinate labour, is ſurely worth recording. It will doubtleſs, be matter of wonder to many; and to ſome, it is to be hoped, of generous emulation. His manner alſo of compoſing ſermons deſerves notice: perhaps the imitation of all, not incapable of it, who would wiſh to ſtrengthen memory by vigorous exerciſe; and to acquire a contemplative habit. By continued practice, the doctor had arrived at a facility of digeſting, and laying up in his mind,

mind, the whole of a diſcourſe: inſomuch that he not unfrequently transferred it upon paper, unleſs broke in upon, at one ſitting, without heſitation, and with more than the rapidity of almoſt any mere tranſcriber. His thoughtful turn of mind, and his parſimony of time, probably led him into this track: certain it is, he much, but modeſtly, recommended the practice, from his own experience. Whether one is maſter of his time, or even otherwiſe, ſtill a much greater portion of it daily runs to waſte, than can well be apprehended, without entering into a detail of particulars. Theſe precious moments are generally diſſipated, without regret, in the ſuppoſed neceſſary gratifications, or amuſements, of life: not to reckon the greater ſacrifices of time, made to indolence, or to impertinent activity; for which, perhaps, we charge ourſelves as criminal. The accuſtomed daily round which fills up life, at the time eaſily juſtifies itſelf; and it is only on bringing longer periods to a fair account, that we become properly ſenſible of the mighty blank ſpaces, and of the irreparable loſs incurred. Here, as in many other things, our friend's conduct was moſt worthy of imitation. It was his frugality

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of time, his redeeming every paſſing moment almoſt, which enabled him to croud ſo much work into ſo ſhort a period. Perhaps no man had leſs reaſon, in any ſenſe, to ſay with the Roman emperor, *My friends, I have loſt a day!*

I juſt mentioned above, the doctor's frequent avocations in the way of his profeſſion. In truth, wherever the diſtreſſed, the diſconſolate, the neceſſitous, the ſick, demanded his preſence, there was he. In ſuch offices of mercy and humanity, he ſurely laboured more abundantly than you all. Beſide the occaſions of miniſtering relief, which his compaſſionate heart ſought out, multitudes of all ſorts, as well as thoſe under his immediate care, applied to him; for, without partial regards himſelf, he was loved by all; and ſuffering of any ſort, which he could any way alleviate, was to him an irreſiſtible call. Was any hungry, or thirſty, or a ſtranger, or naked, or ſick, or in priſon, and he did not miniſter relief, when in his power? All this was, in him, the more meritorious, as it broke in upon his natural love of retirement, of reading, of writing; which he not only gave up to the ſocial active duties of life; but, indeed, his eaſe, his health: He was much in the wretched habitations of poverty and diſ-

eaſe.

eaſe. At all times, regardleſs of the inclemency of ſeaſons, and the obſtruction of crowded ſtreets, he went about doing good. No man ever reduced to practice more thoroughly the philoſopher's juſt deciſion, that where the calls of public or private virtue claſh with learned eaſe, and retirement, the latter ſhould be inſtantly abandoned: But, how difficult this piece of ſelf-denial, common practice abundantly ſhews!

Here, no doubt, it is very obvious to ſay, whence had this man leiſure to produce ſo much in the way of writing *; and, to ſay the leaſt, far above the common ſtandard? The fact, however, is certainly ſo. Nor can indolence, and diſſipation, eaſily conceive what may be atchieved by ſtrong powers, by habits of induſtry, and patience of labour; ſtimulated by motives of duty, and unobſtructed by the cares and pleaſures of life. The doctor had no family. To ſay the truth, his practice might well have reminded one of the Roman poet's humorous apology, for the tardineſs of his poetical productions, taken from the buſtle and interruptions of a town-life, and from the juſtling of buſy crowds; on which he exclaims, with his

* He was alſo the author of various occaſional publications, both here and in *England*.

uſual vein of pleaſantry---*I nunc, & verſus tecum meditare canoros!* Now, in this very ſituation of traverſing ſtreets, to do offices of humanity, our good friend might have often been caught, in the very fact of meditating--not verſe indeed, but very uſeful, honeſt proſe. This will, perhaps, appear an oddity: Be it ſo: it ſaved much time however; and it grew from a contemplative habit; for the ſimplicity of his ſpirit was moſt remote from all affectation.

And now, it is hoped, ſuch unwearied diligence in his vocation, may well account for ſo much work done in it; and ſhould alſo be a powerful incentive to others, to ſtir up every gift that is in them; the rather, as it does not appear that the doctor's pre-eminence lay in the poſſeſſion of natural powers, greatly beyond the common rate of men; (though unqueſtionably he had genius, and various conſiderable abilities of mind) ſo much as in the culture and application of them; and in the vigour they derived from the aſſiſtance of a good heart. But, as theſe advantages are attainable by all, who are not wanting to themſelves; by all who feel that beſt ambition, of being good ſtewards of the manifold grace of God; may not this excellent man's character and conduct be, with great propriety

ſet

ſet forth as a pattern of imitation to others; the only valuable end, it ſhould ſeem, of ſuch exhibitions?

As to circumſtances little intereſting, I have neither lights, nor curioſity to inquire. In ſo private a walk of life, and ſo little diverſified, it is ſcarce to be expected that incidents, worth recording, ſhould have occurred. Adventures rarely mark the lives of wiſe and good men: they hold on the noiſeleſs tenour of their way; and as ſeldom is true modeſty the hero of its own tale. Happy is it for the world, that ſuch men are born into it; where, or when, is of little moment; nor am I inſtructed in theſe curious points: If any memoir remain, relating to them, which deſerves notice, it may be produced. I only know, that his early education was under the direction of an uncle; a venerable and learned man, as the times then were; and whoſe memory the doctor treated much in the ſame ſtrain of reſpect, as *Horace* did that of his father. His preparatory ſtudies were greatly aſſiſted by the wiſe counſels of a man, now generally known, and juſtly admired, the late reverend Mr. *Abernethy*; nor could any pupil well profit more, by example and precept. He afterwards finiſhed his courſe of ſtudy, at the univerſity in *Glaſgow*; which, in teſti-

mony of regard to his merit, conferred on him the degree of doctor in divinity. But, indeed he was much more indebted to the endowments of nature, and his own induſtry, than to any ſchool of learning, commonly ſo called. This reminds me of his having reſided in another ſeat of the muſes, *Cambridge*; not as a diſciple, but as the paſtor of a ſmall congregation; where he enjoyed his beloved retirement, the advantage of books, and of learned converſation; which he moſt diligently improved, during the ſpace of ten or eleven years; laying in ſuch a fund of uſeful knowledge, as is very rarely aſſociated with ſo much modeſt reſerve. Communicative, indeed, where time and place called upon him; but never magiſterial, nor obtruſive; even on occaſions devoted to philoſophical and literary converſe, by younger ſtudents, in whoſe company his humane and ſocial ſpirit much delighted; and where his merit, and a becoming deference for it, gave him a right to preſide with authority. The writer of this ſketch recollects the evening hours, ſacred to improving and manly inquiries, in company of this beſt of men, with the higheſt pleaſure, mixt with the tendereſt regret for his loſs---*Quis deſiderii ſit modus, aut pudor tam chari capitis?*

It

It was omitted above, that his power of doing good was extended, as well as his calls abroad multiplied, by his medical knowledge; which, however, he adminiſtered with his uſual delicacy and prudence, for the relief of diſeaſed poverty, where the phyſician's aſſiſtance was out of reach. Nor, perhaps, was it eaſy to find ſafer advice; at leaſt, no where a ſtronger propenſity, to mitigate thoſe various maladies which fleſh is heir to. Whether he had ever turned his thoughts to medicine as a profeſſion, or that his taſte for every valuable branch of natural knowledge, firſt led him into this road, I know not: more probably, his humanity prompted him to ſeek relief for the diſeaſed; to whom his duty, as a divine, often called him.

One thing adds much to his praiſe, that though his mind was early pre-occupied by the high ſyſtematic theology, then in faſhion; yet he had the ſtrength of mind to emancipate himſelf from all human authority, in matters of religion; and perhaps nothing more obſtinately adheres, than the firſt infuſions of this ſort---*Quo ſemel eſt imbuta recens*, &c. Inſomuch that where ſuperſtition, and want of diſcernment, have once confounded genuine religion with the inventions of men, theſe latter, if ever diſcarded, are very apt to

carry off the other with them; and the man is either ſet a drift before every wind of doctrine, or ſet faſt in the ſhallows of incredulity.

Sudden ſallies of paſſion come out ſtrongly on the countenance, as the ruffling of water before a ſudden breeze; and again quickly vaniſh with their cauſe: whereas, a ſettled calm and ſerenity of look, muſt grow from inward tranquillity; from an eſtabliſhed prevalence of ſocial and benevolent affections. Then, indeed, the countenance effuſes a mild and gentle light: even where there is a natural ſhade of the auſtere and ſaturnine, it diſſolves into ſoftneſs and good humour. It was in theſe one might inſtantly diſcern the goodneſs of the doctor's heart; not in the lines of his face. This is indeed the true charm which lights up the human face divine. The natural tone of our friend's paſſions was ſtrong: however, I am convinced he could not have kept in countenance the ſuppoſed face-critic of *Socrates*, by the confeſſion that illuſtrious father of true philoſophy is reported to have made. Be that as it may, the purity of doctor *Duchall*'s manners was, in all reſpects, moſt exemplary, and free from ſtain.

This

This ſuggeſts another important article. As that eminent ſage, above-mentioned, was diſtinguiſhed by enforcing generous and rational ſentiments of piety; (which, at leaſt before Chriſtianity, appears but little recognized in the practice, and doctrines, of the then prevailing religions;) ſo was our friend a fair and living pattern of that genuine piety, ſo neceſſary to finiſh the religious character, and its brighteſt ornament. In him it was a vital principle, wrought into the inmoſt habit. The fire of true devotion at once warms the heart, and enlightens, and invigorates all the higher powers of the ſoul; while the falſe is a conſuming fire to the intellectual faculties; often evaporating into the wild fervors of enthuſiaſm; again, ſinking into the dregs of ſuperſtition. The true, unſullied by ſuch fumes, and pure from the baſe allay of animal paſſions, burns with an equal, clear, and gentle flame. It burſts not out into impetuous ſallies, which agitate and diſfigure ---the deformity, ſo to ſpeak, not the beauty of holineſs. The warmth of devotion is attempered by cool reaſon, not unanimated; its exterior exertions reſult from the proprieties of occaſion, and the calls of duty; equally remote from falſe ſhame, and that oſtentation which loves to be ſeen of men. Such evi-

dently appeared the piety of our good doctor: his whole life bore witneſs to it: ſo will his writings, to the devout reader.

Toward the cloſe of life, he ſeemed to have caught ſomething of the preſent prevailing ſpirit, with regard to the original language of the Old Teſtament; ſtill, perhaps, a ſtudy more becoming Divines, than common: and, no doubt, uſeful, under the direction of a ſound head, like his: here alſo his renewed diligence had made very conſiderable progreſs: But he regretted it, that this ſort of knowledge is apt to puff up; engendring fooliſh queſtions, and ſtrifes of words; with which men of viſionary and fanatical heads run riot; ſome of them, poſſibly, the dupes of thoſe who lye in wait to deceive, and are unfriendly to the civil and religious liberties of mankind. Certain however it is, that our friend thought the cauſe of truth and religion, in no ſmall danger, by the extraction of doctrines, and ſyſtems, from *hebrew* and *greek* roots, &c. No wonder if ignorance is led aſtray, when learning thus wanders from the road of common ſenſe!

His taſte, in what is called polite learning, was correct and elegant: his ſkill in the languages of *Greece* and *Rome*, gave him eaſy

eaſy acceſs to their fineſt writers: theſe ſages of antiquity he converſed with, to the laſt, when the duties of his profeſſion permitted, and he entered, with the ſpirit of true criticiſm, into their numberleſs beauties. With due reverence be it ſpoken of modern improvements, many and important, doubtleſs, in ſeveral branches of ſcience; yet ſtill theſe ancients, as earlieſt, ſtand juſtly foremoſt in the republic of letters; unequalled hitherto in the finer arts, and undoubted maſters in compoſition; at leaſt if richneſs of invention, a correct and temper'd fire of imagination, if propriety of ſentiment, if harmony and purity of diction, with accuracy of diſtribution—in one word, if a happy imitation of nature, can juſtly intitle to this honourable diſtinction. Might it not have very ſalutary effects, if the profeſſed inſtructors of mankind, who are in poſſeſſion of the moſt intereſting topics, and who are ſet apart publicly to plead the cauſe of virtue and religion, would but ſacrifice a little more to the Graces; and even deign to light up the flames of Chriſtian oratory, from pagan altars? no fire is unhallowed, but by proſtitution to a bad purpoſe: It may be conſecrated to the beſt; and will burn, with unſullied luſtre, in the temple of the true God:

and

and all ſides ſeem now neceſſary, to warm, to animate, to perſuade. The buſineſs of religion is found to ſtick more at the heart, than at the head. How contrary to this is the common practice of many divines; who, inſtead of drawing men on to perfection, by the powers of ſacred eloquence, labour generally at laying the foundation anew; and whereas, for the time, they might have built up living temples; ſtill ſuppoſe it neceſſary to teach, with endleſs repetition, which be the firſt principles of the oracles of God—But to return; ſuch was not the practice of our friend. Far from the inſipidity, at beſt, of an everlaſting *crambe recocta*, he frequently pours out his heart in the warmeſt ſtrains; but well refined, by paſſing through a cool and diſcerning head—an head equally removed from the muddy boiling up of enthuſiaſtic zeal; as from that cold clearneſs, which runs tinkling over a barren ſurface, and only reflects the nothingneſs at bottom. Excuſe, my friend, this honeſt warmth, or temper it with your cooler judgment.

Thus far then in general; but in particular, as to the following diſcourſes: they are almoſt taken at a venture, from the mighty maſs above-mentioned; becauſe ſuch a vein of ſtrong manly ſenſe, and of rational

piety,

piety, runs through the whole, as [illegible] it difficult to find any principle of ſelection. They are all the firſt flow of thought; ſometimes, as before obſerved, committed to paper at one ſitting; and without any view to the preſs, or public at large. None of them appear to have been written anew, or at all reviſed by the author; and therefore may be ſuppoſed very much alike, unleſs where a more intereſting ſubject, or a more happy hour of compoſing, may have made a difference. Without doubt they had appeared to greater advantage, in his own finiſhing: but his fervent zeal to do good; to keep awake, by variety, the attention of his audience, and his modeſty, which confined his views to that purpoſe, prevented his own ſelection and reviſal of any, except one volume on the preſumptive arguments in favour of the Chriſtian religion; which were rather given up to the importunity of his friends, than by himſelf deſtined for publication. It will not then be thought ſtrange, if our author's diſcourſes ſhould not bear a critical examen, with regard to the minutiæ of compoſition: more important matters engaged his attention; nor was fame, as a writer, by any means his aim. But it is hoped, the reader who peruſes them with

ſimplicity

ſimplicity of ſpirit, with the purpoſe of becoming wiſer and better, will not loſe his labour: he will find a rich variety of intereſting matter, ſtrong reaſoning, juſt ſentiments of religion, often enforced by a pathetic animated manner, happily conſpiring, at once to enlighten the underſtanding, and to perſuade the heart. Repetitions, of a ſameneſs of thought, and expreſſion, will doubtleſs ſometimes occur: but this recurrence will chiefly be found, in matters which lye at the root of all religion, and virtue; and evidently very near to the Doctor's heart; far unlike that thin, ſtarveling, common-place-work, which is the produce of a barren head, or of an unfeeling heart!! With regard to correction in ſmaller matters, for the greater needed it not, ſuch as the adjuſting of points and particles, lopping off a few luxuriancies, and reducing to cloſer order ſome ſhoots too widely ſpread; care has been taken, neither to give diſguſt to the intelligent reader, nor obſtruction to the leſs knowing.—It muſt, I think, in general be admitted, that amplification is a favourite figure in pulpit-eloquence; often, perhaps, not inexpedient for the audience, and to the orator himſelf, by no means grievous. However, pleonaſm and expletive, two very puffy,

puffy rhetorical matters, are apt to uſurp the room of what is more ſolid. Would not the preſcription of *Horace*, well applied, cure this bloated diſtemper?—*Eſt brevitate opus ut currat ſententia, neu ſe, impediat verbis laſſas onerantibus aures*—that is, Be brief, write cloſe; then will neither ſentence, nor ſentiment, heavily drawl all along.

Our author was often ſolicited, inſtead of piling up new matter, to chuſe and prepare from the old ſtock, what he thought fitteſt for the preſs: but his own good taſte, and his deference for that of the public, he probably felt would engage him in a taſk, which his many avocations, his growing years and infirmities, would render irkſome. However, he gave ſome hopes of gratifying the requeſt of friends; when death, long a favourite object of his thoughts, approaching unſeen--Death, which intercepts the hope of mortals, and breaks off the purpoſes of the heart, put a period to the labours of this moſt worthy man, on the 4th of May, 1761, when he had compleated his ſixty-fourth year. Indeed, a courſe of inceſſant labour had worn down his conſtitution, not naturally ſtrong: But neither the decline of age, nor the remonſtrances of his friends, could prevail to abate the fervour of his ſpirit.

He

He rather chose to wear out with honourable toil, than with the ruſt of inactivity.

Thus lived Doctor *Duchal*, the delight of his friends! thus he died, deeply regretted by all who knew him! and at a ſeaſon too, when, ſeemingly, ſuch worth was greatly needed: So we fond and ſhort-ſighted mortals count; Yet--*Aliter Dis viſum ſuperis!* and ſilent ſubmiſſion only remains. Look down thou bleſſed ſpirit!--But I forget; with you, the invocation of ſaints is more than even a poetic licence.--And now, my friend, admitting ſovereign perfection to preſide over human affairs; If there does exiſt, as ſurely all nature atteſts, a power above us, who delights in virtue; muſt not the righteous man triumph in death? Can it be other than a new birth, to a more exalted ſtate of life, to a more conſummate felicity, than the heart of man can now conceive? Virtue is the perfection of our higheſt powers, the image of Divinity within us! matured by diſcipline, it is neceſſarily related to objects, "beyond this viſible diurnal ſphere"--to the Supreme Being himſelf, the Supreme Good! Can it then, in its moſt finiſhed ſtate, in the article of dying, be quenched in eternal darkneſs? If ſo, all moral order is ſubverted; and Chaos is come again! Abſtracted

from

from ſupernatural teſtimony, this ſingle phenomenon of the good man's exit from the preſent tranſitory ſcene, by appointment of the great Maſter of the Drama, reflects, one would think, ſuch light of evidence, as nothing can put out, but that folly which has forfeited the joyful hopes of Immortality; or cogitations dark as Erebus--at leaſt, it ſhould ſeem that there is nothing, in all the magazine of metaphyſics, ſo ſatisfactory againſt the fear of extinction, in Death!

SERMON

SERMON I.

All the works of God, in their natural ſtate, beautiful and lovely; the happineſs of moral agents neceſſarily connected with the ſound and healthful ſtate of the mind, or with virtue.

GEN. I. 31.

And God ſaw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good.

THUS the Creator is repreſented as ſurveying the finiſhed work of creation, in this world, and pleaſed with it as good, that is, as anſwering his intention, and the purpoſe for which it was made. And what is before ſaid concerning ſome particular parts, is here pronounced concerning the whole. Upon the moſt ſuperficial view of nature, we cannot but

SERM. I. obſerve the traces of moſt exquiſite deſign, and how wonderfully every thing is adapted to the end for which it was made; the curious who have carried their inquiries far into nature's works which are not obvious to common view, how much have they been ſurprized with the excellence and beauty of that workmanſhip, in every thing, indeed, wonderful? Whether we look to the heavens over our heads, or to the earth under our feet, and the furniture of it; whether we conſider the magnificence of theſe works of God, or the curious contrivance of them, the various ſyſtems into which they are ranged, and the harmony of theſe, making one great whole, we cannot but adore the wiſdom and power of the great Architect, every where diſplayed.

To be a little more particular; the ſun, and moon, and ſtars, which God hath ordained, how do they garniſh the heavens! How beneficial their light and influences! How admirable their order, and how perfect their harmony! Many of them vaſt bodies, moving through ſpaces almoſt inconceivably large, with amazing velocity; yet no diſorder, no tumult. The whole appearing to the ſpectator perfectly quiet and ſtill; and all the ordinances of heaven, to this day, continuing as infinite wiſdom at the firſt fixed them.

Who

Who can look upon that great orb which is the fountain of light and day to this world, and this ſyſtem; who, I ſay, can look upon it ſhining in its full ſplendor, without pleaſing wonder? How much doth this world owe to the genial warmth communicated from it? It is the immediate cauſe of all productions of the vegetable kind, and not leſs neceſſary to the animal. How doth the riſing ſun ſeem to chear all nature; and to diffuſe light and life! The Pſalmiſt repreſents him as *a bridegroom coming out of his chamber*, and as *a ſtrong man rejoicing to run his race. His going forth*, ſays he, *is from the end of heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it, and there is nothing hidden from his heat.* SERM. I.

Again, look upon the earth under the influences of the genial warmth of ſpring; how gay and pleaſing does it appear! The whole face of it covered with a beautiful living green; and varied with innumerable flowers, which God hath cloathed and decked; and which in their youthful bloom give ſo much joy and delight to the ſpectator. How lively the colours! with what exquiſite curioſity, with what pleaſing variety are their ſhades contrived! When the lofty trees too of the foreſt appear in their new cloathing; and the fruit-trees, in their bloſſoms, promiſe their annual tribute to the animal world, how

SERM. I. pleaſing the ſcene! Again, when we look upon the fields *white unto harveſt*, and bringing forth food for man and beaſt, how natural is it to admire, to rejoice in the goodneſs of him who is ſaid to cloath the valleys with corn! All theſe works of God praiſe him, and nature ſeemeth univerſally to rejoice.

Look again into the animal world, into the various orders and kinds in it, from the great Leviathan which ruleth the deep, and the Elephant hugeſt of land animals, down to thoſe inſects, many of which are ſo ſmall as to eſcape the notice of the unaſſiſted eye; and probably ſome of them too minute to be diſcovered by our beſt glaſſes; how unſpeakably various their orders and kinds! what multitudes of individuals! how aſtoniſhing are all! fitted with parts, and members, and powers, and inſtincts, for the elements they are to inhabit, and the purpoſes they are to ſerve; for finding out, and uſing their proper and neceſſary ſuſtenance! Here is an immenſely large field of contemplation, to which, in reading the holy ſcriptures, our thoughts are often turned; more particularly in the book of Pſalms. But what I would chiefly obſerve, is the rich appearance which nature makes in her infinitely various productions, and how gay and pleaſing;

pleaſing; eſpecially, in what abundance life is communicated; and how much, in the various orders of it, is enjoyed; even the loweſt animals having their ſhare of delight and happineſs; which many of them we ſee manifeſt in a moſt ſenſible manner; eſpecially in youth; but always when they are in health, and at eaſe. And though they are liable to much pain and ſuffering, which they can very affectingly as well as ſenſibly expreſs, as the vegetable kinds have likewiſe their diſorders and ſickneſs; yet, when nature is in its right ſtate, all looks gay, and pleaſing, and happy. SERM. I.

But we may be ſure the infinitely wiſe and almighty author of nature, who hath diſplayed ſuch contrivance and goodneſs in the vegetable and animal world, was not leſs attentive to his nobleſt workmanſhip on earth, namely, human nature and mankind: and indeed we ſee that he hath been moſt liberal to our ſpecies.

All this fine and rich ſcene which we have been ſpeaking of, and all the furniture and inhabitants of it, are given into the hands of man, who is conſtituted lord of the ſublunary creation. This is very particularly taken notice of by the author of the hiſtory of the creation, Gen. i. 26. *And*

SERM. I. *God ſaid, let us make man in our image, after our likeneſs; and let them have dominion over the fiſh of the ſea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them. And God bleſſed them, and God ſaid unto them, be fruitful and multiply, and repleniſh the earth, and ſubdue it, and have dominion over the fiſh of the ſea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.* And when we take a view of our own nature, and the furniture of it, how bountiful hath our maker been to us! How curious the ſtructure of our bodies, and how much diſtinguiſhed from the brutal orders, in erectneſs of ſtature, and by the majeſty and beauty of the human countenance! But what a treaſure is there in the powers of the mind; in the underſtanding; in the imagination, and invention; in the various affections and appetites planted in us; in the ſenſe of beauty, and decency, and dignity: and eſpecially in the ſenſe of good and evil, of the morally excellent and vile! When we attend to all theſe things, we ſee that man was moſt happily adapted to the ſtate in which he was

was placed; and made capable of an unſpeak- SERM.
ably various pleaſure and happineſs, in being. I.
He hath the pleaſures of ſenſe in common with the inferior brutal orders; he has pleaſures of the imagination, in what is great, new, beautiful, or wonderful, which they know little or nothing of. He has a capacity of receiving knowledge, to the meaſure of which, and the progreſs which may be made in it, imagination itſelf cannot fix a certain limit. He has the pleaſures which ſpring from the ſocial affections; and how great and delicate are theſe! He hath the pleaſures, or a capacity of them, which ariſe from the knowledge of God, and the fruition of his glory; he hath thoſe that ſpring from a ſenſe of good and evil, from the practice of virtue, and from the higheſt, that is, moral excellence and beauty; I do but juſt name theſe things, as what are well known and familiar to our minds: But we find when they are all laid together, that our maker hath, in our original frame, made very ample proviſion for us; and that mankind was not leſs ennobled in the powers of the mind, than in that dominion that was given them over the whole ſublunary creation. Let us then ſuppoſe a creature thus endowed, in a ſtate in all reſpects perfectly healthful, and all the powers and principles

SERM. I. of action and enjoyment, in a proper ſtate, and exerciſed regularly towards their proper objects; an underſtanding, of ſuch great capacity, by daily attention and improvement making progreſs in knowledge; all the appetites gratified within the limits of moderation; the paſſions, which are the ſalt of life, ſo regulated, as effectually to anſwer their ſeveral ends; but cauſing no diſorder nor tumult in the ſoul; the ſocial affections yielding, by all their tenderneſs and delicacy, the chaſteſt and pureſt delight; the love of God, a ſource of the higheſt joy; and the love and conſtant practice of righteouſneſs, yielding to men ſatisfaction conſtantly freſh; in a word, ſuppoſe ſuch a creature acting according to the intention of Nature, and how excellent and happy muſt he be! Exiſtence to a creature in ſuch a ſtate, muſt be an invaluable bleſſing; and well might the adorable creator ſay concerning this, as all his other works, that it *was very good.* A man has a very great treaſure, in having himſelf given into his poſſeſſion.

But hitherto we have conſidered nature only in its proper, and its healthful ſtate; whereas we all know it is liable to many diſorders, which hurt that ſtate, which mar the beauty, and ſpoil the gaity of its appearance. We often ſee this in the vegetable world; a guſt of blaſting wind makes the flowers to droop and fade;

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fade; it deſtroys and ruins the glory of the fruit-tree, and of the foreſt. If the ſhowers from heaven are reſtrained, and the earth is expoſed to a ſtorching ſun; the herbage of the fields ſickens and dies. The rich produce of the harveſt may be ſwept away, by the inclemency and tempeſtuouſneſs of ſeaſons: and the face of nature, at one time all life and beauty, may at another time, appear as an horrid wilderneſs. So with reſpect to the animal kinds, how many and ruinous the diſorders they are liable to! The flocks and the herds have their epidemical diſeaſes; and that life which is void of fear and of care, and which, in a ſtate of health, appears ſo gay and full of enjoyment, is turned into weakneſs and diſtreſs, and bears the characters of ſuffering and woe. This is often ſeen to be the caſe. Theſe ſufferings of the vegetable and brutal creation, and of man the Lord of it, are in very poetical ſtrains deſcribed by the prophet *Joel*, chap. i. 10. *The field is waſted, the land mourneth, for the corn is waſted, the new wine is dried up, the oil languiſheth. Be ye aſhamed, O ye huſbandmen! howl, O ye wine-dreſſers! for the wheat and for the barley, becauſe the harveſt of the field is periſhed. The vine is dried up, and the fig-tree languiſheth, the pomegranate-tree, the palm-tree alſo, and the apple-tree, even all the trees*

of

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of the field, are withered, becauſe joy is withered away from the ſons of men. And verſe 15, *Alas for the day, for the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a deſtruction from the Almighty ſhall it come. Is not the meat cut off before your eyes, yea joy and gladneſs from the houſe of our God? The ſeed is rotten under their clods; the garners are laid deſolate, the barns are broken down, for the corn is withered. How do the beaſts groan? The herds of cattle are perplexed becauſe they have no paſture, yea the flocks of ſheep are made deſolate.*

As for human nature, we know it is liable to innumerable diſorders. Animal life, in man, is ſometimes ſeen labouring in acute fevers, in racking pains, in waſting conſumptions; ſometimes groaning under the grievous preſſures of famine, or laid waſte by the peſtilence: Nay, often in the very bloſſom of it, all its pride and glory are laid in ruins. Beſides, human nature is liable to diſtempers and diſorders of which the brutal orders are not ſuſceptible—diſorders of the moral kind; which are indeed much more diſmal than any which infeſt mere animal life: For theſe ruin nature in its higheſt excellencies, and deprive it of its pureſt and moſt ſubſtantial enjoyment. So man is conſtituted, that conſiſtently with moſt grievous diſorders preſſing the animal frame and powers, the mind may yet be in

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an excellent and happy ſtate, having the pureſt SERM.
and moſt ſatisfying reliſhes of enjoyment. I.
Whereas, if the mind is morally ſick, that is, corrupted and depraved, and its powers perverted; then the dignity and glory of the man, all enjoyment properly human, and worthy of his original honourable ſtate, is loſt: nor can that loſs poſſibly be repaired by any healthfulneſs of the animal frame, by any ſtrength of the mere animal powers, nor by the higheſt reliſhes of ſenſual pleaſure, or the richeſt variety and abundance of it. Prevailing immorality is the very deſtruction of the ſoul; turning that which was the greateſt joy in the creation, into the moſt loathſome deformity. But then it is to be obſerved, that this calamitous, and, at the ſame time, hateful ſtate of the mind, is of our own procuring; it is no part of the work of God. *He made man upright, but they have ſought out many inventions.* And the apoſtle James has given us a full account of this matter, ch. i. 13. *Let no man when he is tempted, ſay, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither doth he tempt any man, but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own luſt and enticed. Then when luſt hath conceived it bringeth forth ſin, and ſin when it is finiſhed, bringeth forth death.* It is from the guilty conſent of the ſoul to the clamorous

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morous demands of irregular and enflamed paſſion, that all this evil takes its riſe. However, it is only this death of the ſoul, its corruption and depravity, which can render human nature hateful and abominable. It is in itſelf an excellent and lovely form; hath the nobleſt excellence and beauty, when in a right moral ſtate, ſuch as was repreſented before; but when this comelineſs is turned into corruption, all is loſt. The ſum of what I have been ſaying is, that nature, in all its productions, when free from diſtemper, and in a proper ſtate, is beautiful and lovely; in its animal productions, full of life, full of pleaſure and enjoyment. And this eſpecially is the caſe, with reſpect to mankind in a right moral ſtate; as juſt the reverſe is the caſe, in a ſtate of depravity.

Now, this leads to what was meant principally to be inſiſted upon; and on account of which, indeed, I choſe this ſubject; namely, the unaccountable folly and abſurdity of men, who are in queſt of happineſs in the ways of ſin and unrighteouſneſs, although theſe are a direct contradiction to nature, tend to ruin the excellencies of it, and put it intirely out of its courſe. This folly and abſurdity is undoubtedly very common. All men are neceſſarily determined to ſeek after happineſs: and it is inconceivable that any man

man ſhould follow licentious and wicked courſes of life, unleſs he imagined that in theſe he ſhould find the greateſt meaſure of pleaſure and happineſs; or that he ſhould, with obſtinacy, avoid the paths of virtue and wiſdom, unleſs he thought that in theſe his enjoyments ſhould be reſtrained; and that he ſhould be ſhut up in an uneaſy, and in a painful ſtate. This I take to be, if one may term it ſo, the very core of all the miſchief, the original depravity of the mind, by which men are led aſtray. There is in their heart a reluctance againſt holineſs of life, conſidered as a grievous yoke, as that which checks a perſon in that liberty of gratifying his deſires and inclinations, which is ſo pleaſing. And, as to thoſe high reliſhes of joy and pleaſure, which are ſaid to be found in the ways of righteouſneſs and religious obedience, ſuch characters have no notion of them; if they may be permitted only, to go on with an unreſtrained licence in gratifying their preſent deſires, which is their paradiſe, let who will, for them, follow after the joys of a virtuous life, and the rewards of it—I add, the rewards of it; for though theſe are ſpoken of as moſt ample and glorious, as what ſhall make men completely and eternally happy; yet they are of ſuch a nature, that the unrighteous can have no taſte for them, nor delight

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light in them; and if ſuch men at all deſire to be received into heaven, it is merely to eſcape dreadful pain, which is really their motive; for neither the company nor the exerciſes, nor the entertainments of the world above, can be agreeable to them: In truth, againſt all theſe things they have a rooted averſion; *the carnal mind is enmity againſt God*; and how can it, in ſuch a ſtate, find delight in his preſence, or reliſh thoſe pure pleaſures which are at his right hand? This I take to be a juſt repreſentation of the ſtate of the mind labouring under, or, one ſhould rather ſay, enſlaved by ſuch prejudices. And could men attain to a right ſenſe of things, and be thoroughly convinced that *the ways of wiſdom are pleaſantneſs, and all her paths peace; that ſhe is a tree of life to thoſe who find her*, and that which alone beareth true happineſs; they would then, in the moſt cordial manner, embrace wiſdom, and follow her divine dictates. This is a point which can never be too much laboured in our own minds. Now, to convince men of this truth, and to give them full ſatisfaction, what hath been ſaid in this diſcourſe, may be very effectually applied. If a ſtate of holineſs and righteouſneſs is that ſtate which is ſuitable to nature, and in which the very perfection of it conſiſts; then ſurely this ſtate, and this only

only; muſt be truly bleſſed and happy; and every thing oppoſite to theſe, muſt hurt nature, and tend to wretchedneſs. Will any man ſay that a ſtate unnatural, and quite oppoſite to nature's deſign, can be a pleaſing and happy one? A ſtate, in which every thing tends to ruin and deſtruction! In which, all health and ſoundneſs is loſt! As well may one ſay, that men can be happy, and have the enjoyment of life, when they are labouring in a burning fever, or amidſt pains of the head or heart, or under any other grievous ſickneſs. Look upon the face of nature around us, as has been already obſerved, when it is in a ſtate perfectly ſound and healthful, and how gay, how pleaſing, doth it appear! But how much otherwiſe does it appear, when diſtemper is preying upon the beauties of it! When the parched earth becomes as a wilderneſs, and the living green is withered away t When the flowers of the field, by a malignant blaſt, fade, and all their glory is loſt! When contagious diſtempers in the flocks, conſume them! When a murrain ſeizes on the herds, depriving them of ſtrength and life! Or, ſee how an animal, rejoicing in that life which nature hath given it, joyous and pleaſed in following its own inſtincts, how I ſay, it appears when taken out of its proper element! We then ſee no more gaiety, no more pleaſure, no more enjoyment.

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enjoyment. And ſo it is univerſally; whatever is in a ſtate unnatural, a ſtate in which nature is diſordered and diſtempered, muſt be unhappy; with health and ſoundneſs, all true enjoyment is loſt: Can there be occaſion for farther illuſtration of this? But again, to finiſh this argument, will any perſon ſay, and ſtand by it, that a ſtate of holineſs and righteouſneſs is unſuitable to the frame of human nature; or that unrighteouſneſs and vice is ſuitable to it; that the former is its diſtemper, and the latter its health and ſoundneſs? No ſurely; the whole frame of nature loudly exclaims againſt this, and demonſtrates the contrary. Can there be a natural, and ſound, and healthful ſtate, in which a man is ſelf-condemned, and in which his own conſcience neceſſarily becomes his enemy? Can that be a ſound and a natural ſtate, in which blind paſſions prevail againſt reaſon, and the calm dictates of true wiſdom? Can that be a ſound ſtate and an healthful, in which the nobleſt affections are cramped, and the tendency of them quite obſtructed, by thoſe which are the loweſt and meaneſt? Can that be a natural ſtate, in which the mind is at enmity with the moſt perfect, with infinite excellency and grace? Is that a natural ſtate, in which all largeneſs and liberality of mind are ruined by a ſelfiſh ſpirit? In which the ſenſe of decency and

and dignity hath no power? In which animal nature, and the paſſions of it, are attended to, and moſt obſequiouſly ſerved; and the nobler powers and principles neglected? Can that be a natural and ſound ſtate, in which the extravagancies of intemperance and debauchery are preferred to ſobriety and decency of life; falſehood, injuſtice, oppreſſion, cruelty and violence, to truth, honour, integrity, generoſity, tenderneſs and compaſſion? It is abſolutely impoſſible. All theſe things are the ſickneſſes and diſtempers of the ſoul; utterly inconſiſtent with its health and ſoundneſs; and alſo with its happineſs and enjoyment. Of this let us be all thoroughly convinced. I am far from denying, that men actually have pleaſure in the ways of vice and unrighteouſneſs; for ſurely if they had not pleaſure in them, they would never purſue them: but indeed that pleaſure, ſo far as it is inconſiſtent with purity, with ſobriety, and goodneſs of heart, is exactly like the apprehended happineſs of a perſon in a delirium by a fever; or like the fine ſcenes which a diſordered imagination creates to itſelf; and is, in truth, as empty and unſubſtantial. Let us attend to what is real health, with reſpect to the animal frame, when men are free from pain and ſickneſs; when all the animal powers

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SERM. I. are in such a state as to perform the proper functions, and answer the intentions of them in our make; when the vital fluid moves in a brisk and easy flood, when spirits enough are furnished for the business, and the various services of life; so that men can say they are quite well; what a pleasing sensation have they of complete health! It is afflicting to have this sensation interrupted by sickness or pain, and how pleasing the return of the sensation, when these interruptions have been removed! Just such in kind, but of a much higher relish, are the sensations of the mind, when the spiritual or moral state is sound and healthful; when the moral powers are all capable of, and well disposed for, their proper functions; now, these pleasing sensations must be the strongest, and yield the highest delight, in that state in which the moral powers are most perfect, and exercised without any interruption. Then indeed men will find themselves quite well; perfectly easy and satisfied. The more we have of true worth in this world, the more we shall have of this sensation of health; and we shall have it perfectly, and without interruption, in the world above.

Let us rest assured, and to all who have experience, it is matter, not of faith, but of sense and

and feeling, that there is as great reality in the moral or ſpiritual, as in the animal life; the powers are as real; the ſenſe of right and wrong, of excellent and vile, of lovely and hateful, the original deſire planted in us of excellence, of dignity, and honour, as real; the enjoyments of the moral life, in the gratifications of its original appetites, as real; the tendency of that life to its own preſervation, and to avoid what is injurious, the ſenſe of injury when it has been hurt, and of ſoundneſs and health, when it is ſafe and well, all theſe are moſt real. And to look upon theſe things as viſionary, is a direct contradiction to reaſon and nature, to feeling and experience. To conclude this argument, how abſurd then are theſe prejudices, by which men become averſe to holineſs and righteouſneſs, and to that kind of enjoyment and happineſs, which God hath annexed to them! It is as if they believed they ſhould not be happy in a ſtate of moſt perfect health; and were uneaſy unleſs when in an infirm and ſickly condition. Let all imaginations of this kind be rooted intirely out of us. We can never take a right ſtep while we are under the power of them; nor ſhall know ſolid and ſubſtantial happineſs, till we get rid of them. I own indeed, that in the holy ſcriptures, we have repreſentations

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SERM. I. of the divine life, ſometimes, as difficult and laborious; as a ſtate of tribulation and ſuffering: but none of theſe repreſentations contradict what has been ſaid upon this argument. They relate, principally, to theſe two things; firſt, a ſtate of perſecution for conſcience ſake; this hath in many ages been the ſtate of good men; and, in a very particular manner, the ſtate of the diſciples of Chriſt in the firſt ages, of which our bleſſed Lord often forewarned them, and required of them to arm themſelves for meeting with ſuch a ſtate, by the moſt deliberate, and calm, and firm reſolution. But ſuch perſecution, for conſcience ſake, is not the ſtate of all good men: many are free from it. Or elſe, theſe repreſentations in ſcripture, of which I have been ſpeaking, relate to the ſeverities of ſelf-denial; which in the beginnings of true religion are moſt painful, eſpecially when exorbitant paſſions have grown to great ſtrength, by habits of vice, and a continual gratification of them; or they relate to ſome temptations particularly ſtrong, to which, in the preſent ſtate, the integrity of the ſervants of God may be expoſed. But it never was, nor could it be, the intention of them to teach, that holineſs and righteouſneſs are not the health and ſoundneſs of the mind; or that in the enjoyment of ſuch

ſuch health, men ſhould not find themſelves ſo far, completely happy. For this is the language of nature, of ſcripture, and of experience, in every inſtance in which there has been experience, without one exception. We muſt therefore adhere to theſe two great principles, that in holineſs and righteouſneſs conſiſt the ſoundneſs and health of the mind; and that in ſuch a ſtate of health and ſoundneſs, men ſhall find themſelves really happy. SERM. I.

That I may come to a concluſion of this diſcourſe; it muſt be owned, notwithſtanding all the diſadvantages we labour under, that human nature is an excellent work of God: But to eſtimate it rightly, we muſt not attend to it as defiled and corrupted, as rendered abominable, by vice; we muſt conſider what it was originally made for, and in what a pleaſing and honourable light, by means of religious and virtuous culture and diſcipline, it may appear. As it is originally the nobleſt work of God in this world, ſo, by corruption and depravity, it may, and has in many inſtances, become not only mean and low, but indeed hateful and offenſive; that it ever has become ſuch, we are not to aſcribe to our maker, but to ourſelves: For, let us view it arrayed in the robes of purity and righteouſneſs, as enriched with holy and worthy diſpo-

SERM. I. fitions, as full of the love of God and charity, of the moſt generous and liberal ſentiments; and then it is truly of a lovely form. God might well be introduced as ſaying concerning it, before it was at all depraved, as he did concerning his other works, that it *was very good*. It was, indeed, perfectly worthy of the divine counſel concerning it, *made in the likeneſs of God*, and worthy to be at the ſummit of this ſublunary creation. But as it is capable of being deprived of this excellence, and of ſinking into a moſt miſerable and deformed ſtate, ſo I do not think any thing is more uſeful than ſerious obſervation of the appearance it makes, in thoſe characters in which virtue and holineſs are truly illuſtrious; and on the other hand, of it's wretched appearance, in a ſtate of the greateſt moral deformity. When we compare the very beſt men whom hiſtory has recorded, or who have come under our own obſervation, with the very worſt and moſt wicked of mankind, how wide a difference muſt we perceive! See a perſon abandoned to the impurities, of the fleſh, to intemperance and debauchery; a perſon falſe and treacherous, ſelfiſh, and without any bowels to others; revengeful and cruel; in a word, ſeeming to take pleaſure in all miſchief and wickedneſs; and who does not

not loath the character? Set againſt this the love of God; undiſſembled good will and charity to mankind, purity and chaſtity of manners, the ſtricteſt juſtice and righteouſneſs, the greateſt liberality of heart and hand, tenderneſs, exact fidelity, meekneſs, humility, and ſuch other graces, in that eminence in which they have appeared in ſome characters; and who but muſt highly eſteem, and love? Who would chuſe to be of the former, who would not chuſe to be of the latter claſs? Even a bad man would, perhaps, abhor the thoughts of being the worſt man. Yet certainly the very ſame reaſons, for which he would abhor being the worſt man, ſhould prevail againſt his being a bad man at all. But, I ſay, human nature as it appears in the finiſhings of moral improvement, is indeed excellent, and lovely, and worthy of its glorious author. Let us then ever remember, that in virtue its excellency and beauty, its health and ſoundneſs, conſiſt; and that conſequently from this its higheſt enjoyment ſprings. In another, a contrary ſtate, we may imagine ourſelves happy; in this we feel ourſelves ſo, and find ſubſtantial reſt to our ſouls. Let us then embrace holineſs and righteouſneſs of life, with that earneſtneſs with which we would in ſickneſs embrace health; or with which, being de-

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formed, we would embrace comelineſs and beauty; or in a ſtate of penury and want, would embrace plenty and fulneſs; ever remembering that what is againſt nature, muſt be unhappy; and that true felicity ariſes from thinking and acting according to it.

SERMON

SERMON II.

To be filled with the fulneſs of God, explained and illuſtrated.

EPHES. III. 19.

And to know the love of Chriſt, which paſſeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulneſs of God.

IT is certain there is no eloquence equal to that in which the fulneſs of the heart expreſſes itſelf. When men have a lively ſenſe, in their own minds, of the ſubjects upon which they ſpeak; and the imagination is thoroughly warmed; they then cannot well be at a loſs; but will, in the moſt natural manner, and with the greateſt force of expreſſion, explain their ſentiments to others. This will be eſpecially remarkable, when the ſubject is in itſelf great, ſublime, and important;

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tant; ſuch as thoroughly poſſeſſes the ſoul, and engages the affections. And, ſurely, this cannot be ſaid concerning any ſubjects, equally with thoſe that are divine; ſuch as the exiſtence, and perfections of God; the goodneſs that appears in the whole of his adminiſtration towards the Children of men; eſpecially their redemption by our Lord, Jeſus Chriſt, and the glorious hopes that are founded upon the chriſtian revelation. How ſhould a juſt ſenſe of theſe things dilate the heart! What eloquence ſhould it inſpire! And with how happy and eaſy a flow will men, thus animated, pour forth their ſentiments in the praiſes of God! In ſuch a fulneſs of heart, the Pſalmiſt tells us, in the 45th Pſalm, *that his tongue was as the pen of a ready writer.* But none of the ſacred writers are more eminent, in this reſpect, than the apoſtle *Paul.* The attentive and intelligent reader often ſees that he riſes, as it were into rapture; pouring out his heart in a torrent of the loftieſt ſentiments, and of the ſtrongeſt expreſſions. Language itſelf ſeems, upon ſome occaſions, to fail him. In ſuch a temper you may plainly ſee he was, when he wrote the paſſage of which my text is a part. It begins at the 14th verſe. *For this cauſe I bow my knees unto the father of our Lord, Jeſus Chriſt, of whom the whole*

whole family in heaven and earth is named, that SERM.
he would grant unto you, according to the riches II.
of his glory, to be ſtrengthened with might by his ſpirit in the inner man. That Chriſt may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all ſaints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Chriſt, that paſſeth knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fulneſs of God. It is the trueſt ſublime to which he here riſes; and he appears to have felt what the fulneſs of God means, when he thus expreſſed himſelf. He prays for the Epheſians, *that God according to the riches of his glory,* or his glorious riches, meaning the grace of God, *would ſtrengthen them with might by his ſpirit in the inner man.* That by the happy influences of that divine agent, they might be confirmed in the profeſſion and practice of the chriſtian religion; prepared alſo to reſiſt and overcome all temptation to depart from it. He prays that, by *faith, Chriſt may dwell in their hearts.* That is, that they might attain ſuch a faith, as would make their hearts and beſt affections ſacred to Chriſt; ſuch as would make their ſouls a fit habitation for him, by purifying them from all vicious and irregular affections; and bringing their whole ſpirits into a thorough

SERM. II. rough conformity to his will. So we read, that *faith purifies the heart*; and that chriſtians, *with open face, beholding as in a glaſs the glory of the Lord, are changed into the ſame image.* He farther goes on, *that you may be rooted, and grounded in love, and may be able to comprehend with all ſaints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Chriſt that paſſeth knowledge.* Rooted and grounded in love; repreſenting chriſtians as planted in love; and very juſtly indeed; for their religion is love; and in this they grow; by this likewiſe they are prepared for a juſt ſenſe of the love of Chriſt; which the author calls *comprehending with all ſaints the length, breadth, depth, and height of it*, by a very ſignificant accumulation of metaphorical expreſſions, and a certain energy in them, that exceeds the limits of ſtrict propriety; thus ſetting forth its incomprehenſible greatneſs. For he did not mean that any one could fully comprehend it, in the common acceptation of that term, as he expreſſly declares it paſſeth knowledge; and then concludes with the utmoſt effort, as it were, of expreſſion, *that they might be filled with*, or to *all the fulneſs of God*; all that fulneſs in which God communicates himſelf, and the gifts

gifts of his grace, to his ſervants; and all the fulneſs of their enjoyment of him. SERM. II.

Theſe words, "*Being filled with all the fulneſs of God*," do ſtrongly repreſent the honour, the true riches, and the happineſs of thoſe ſervants of Chriſt who are arrived at the higher eminencies of religion: They repreſent a ſtate of the mind, with which it muſt be ſuppoſed the apoſtle's experience made him well acquainted; and in which he enjoyed that divine ſatisfaction, which he wiſhes for his friends. He really ſeems, at the inſtant he wrote this, to be himſelf full of what he prayed for on their behalf; and expreſſes in the ſtrongeſt terms, the overflowing of his own heart.

It muſt, one would think, be an agreeable, as well as an uſeful entertainment, to make ſuch obſervations upon this ſtate of mind, as tend to explain it; and by that means, to kindle in us deſires of attaining to it. And this is what I propoſe to do, in the preſent diſcourſe. The account which the Apoſtle John gives us of God, will greatly aſſiſt our meditations on this ſubject. *God*, ſaith he, *is light*, and *God is love*. To be full of God then, in this view, is to be full of light, and of love: Which is alſo very agreeable to the Apoſtle Paul's ſenſe of the matter; as we may collect

collect it from the verſes above recited, preceding the text. There he prays for the Epheſians, *that Chriſt might dwell in their hearts by faith*, (which is the fruit of divine light) *and that they might be rooted and grounded in love*; and what indeed, ſhould the fulneſs of God be, which is ſpoken of in the text, but a fulneſs of theſe two? The truth is, the moſt perfect ſtate of a chriſtian muſt be ſuppoſed to conſiſt in them, and in the happineſs neceſſarily reſulting from them. He who is full of light and love, has attained to the higheſt degree; in him the divine image is moſt fair and beautiful. But to be particular.

God is light, and in him, ſaith St. John, *is no darkneſs at all:* He is the fountain of light to his creatures: He is the author of our rational powers; by which we compare things together, and form judgments concerning them; and by which we are capable, from known and certain principles of purſuing truth through a great variety of ſteps and conſequences. He is alſo the author of thoſe, very properly called, higher powers and ſenſes, by which we perceive, in matters of morality the beautiful and the deformed, the great and the mean, the pure and impure, the praiſe-worthy and reproachful. All theſe ſenſations

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are originally from the father of lights; from him, by whom every man who cometh into the world is in ſome meaſure enlightened, in the knowledge of what is true, and what is right. But as ignorance and darkneſs, through the negligence, and corrupt prejudices, and wickedneſs of men, had greatly prevailed from age to age; as blind ſuperſtition and idolatry, and the worſt practical errors, had as it were taken, and kept poſſeſſion of the world, for a long time; it therefore pleaſed God to reveal his will from heaven; to point out to mankind the way to ſalvation; in the earlier ages more imperfectly; then encreaſing this light by degrees, till at length, the ſun of righteouſneſs aroſe, bringing with him a fulneſs of day; that is, the ſon of God, coming from the boſom of the father, fully revealed him to mankind, and all the counſels of his grace. *In him was light, and the light was the life of men.* He appeared *to turn men from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan to God; to open the eyes of the blind, and to lead them in paths by which they had not walked.* SERM. II.

Unſpeakable are the advantages we enjoy by the goſpel. How eaſily does a true diſciple of Chriſt attain to ſuch meaſures of the knowledge of God, of his perfections, his adminiſtration

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adminiſtration, and gracious deſigns, as the antients, of whatever age or nation, without this clearer revelation, could not by all their reſearches arrive at. How eaſily are we now enabled to remove whatever real or apparent difficulties, with reſpect to the method of appeaſing the offended deity, of procuring the pardon of ſin, and with reſpect to what ſhould become of us at death; difficulties, which, on ſome occaſions, greatly puzzled the wiſeſt men of old; and from ſome of them, drew very moving expreſſions of perplexity and doubt. But after all, the knowledge of *God, in Chriſt reconciling the world to himſelf; not imputing our iniquities to us*, and opening the faireſt proſpect into immortality; even this knowledge, I ſay, when it goes no farther than ſpeculation, is of ſmall avail: for men may be very fully inſtructed in it, and yet remain in utter darkneſs. Corrupt prejudices, and evil affections, may have ſtill the poſſeſſion of their hearts; and they may thus continue ſtrangers to the light of life: For there is the wideſt difference between this ſtate of the mind, and that wherein men are under the power of truth, new-molded, and tranſformed by it. This is that illumination and knowledge, by which *they are changed into the image of God, from glory to glory, even as by the*

the ſpirit of the Lord. It is that light, which becomes a vital principle; and in which men have ſuch clear impreſſions of things, as determine them to avoid evil, and cleave to that which is good. Thus, to know God and our Saviour, is eternal life: And this knowledge the holy ſcriptures teach us to aſcribe to the ſpirit of God. SERM. II.

Now as light, taken in a moral ſenſe, does not only ſignify the knowledge of the truth; but likewiſe, and principally, a right ſenſe of things as they are good or evil, lovely or the contrary, with diſpoſitions of mind ſuitable to ſuch a ſenſe; in like manner, as moral darkneſs does not only ſignify mere ignorance; but rather corrupt prejudices, and the bad affections that grow from them: hence it is evident, that when men have this holy light diffuſed through their ſouls; they muſt then alſo be full of holy love: It is apparent from what has been already ſaid, that theſe two are inſeparably connected; and therefore in the holy ſcriptures, knowledge is often uſed to ſignify love. For the objects of this knowledge, are not ſpeculative abſtracted truths, but ſuch as the affections are to be regulated by: they are ſuch objects as preſent to the mind thoſe things that are true, and pure, and lovely, that are honeſt, and of good report; above

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all, they preſent to the mind, the glorious moral perfections of the divine Being, and his love to the children of men, made manifeſt in Jeſus Chriſt. Now, when there is a juſt ſenſe of theſe things; when men have that light by which they can truly diſcern them; it is impoſſible the mind ſhould not be ſuitably affected; for what appears lovely to us, while it does ſo appear, we cannot but love; juſt as what appears odious, while it does appear ſo, we cannot but hate. In no caſe we do not find it is at all at our power, to command, by a mere act of will, a change in our affections: This can be done only by applying to thoſe methods by which our ſenſe of things is altered. Upon the whole, while we have a juſt ſenſe of good and evil, we ſhall love the one, and hate the other. The illumination of the mind then, by which men attain to this ſenſe, muſt be attended with holy love; they will then certainly delight in what is righteous, pure and good. And, above all, that glorious Being who is perfectly righteous, and good and holy, will be the object of their ſtrongeſt affection, of their higheſt delight. Thus is the love of God *ſhed abroad* in the hearts of his ſervants, *by the Holy Ghoſt.*

And as, in a right ſtate of the mind, this love muſt have the aſcendant; ſo where it has, it proves the moſt powerful of all principles. All other paſſions and affections, however naturally vehement, are ſubjected to, and under the control of it; and every thing corrupt and evil flies before it. As it is exerted in a ſteady uniform tendency of the ſpirit to God, as the object of higheſt delight; ſo it prepares men for a thorough compliance with his will; for an obedience univerſal, ſincere, and perſevering. Agreeably to which, we are taught in ſcripture, that *this is the love of God that we keep his commandments*. And, therefore, though this ſacred affection of Soul, is to be conſidered ra theras a virtue of the higheſt rank, than a paſſion; yet, it has its ardors and emotions; which, if they muſt go by the name of enthuſiaſm, it is ſurely an enthuſiaſm of a right kind; an enthuſiaſm, deeply rooted in the human heart. No man, who has any pretentions to what may be called taſte, but muſt know, that in ſurveying ſome very diſtinguiſhed characters, and preſenting to his imagination actions peculiarly heroic, his heart is greatly moved; nay he muſt feel the whole animal frame affected by it; nor does any man account this a blemiſh and weakneſs; but in truth, a real excel-

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lency; and not to be moved at all, or but weakly, by ſuch characters and actions, ſpeaks a ſtupid ſtate of mind, a wretched want of taſte. For example, he who can read the ſtory of Joſeph; or view the illuſtrious young hero David, in vindication of the honour of Iſrael's God, accepting the chalenge of Goliah; or who can ſurvey the amiable character of Jonathan, and the tenderneſſes of his friendſhip; he, I ſay, who can view all this, without emotion; muſt be ſuppoſed void of the fineſt feelings of humanity. But now, is it natural, is it highly praiſe-worthy, to be thus moved with the excellency of imperfect characters; and ſhall it yet be accounted unnatural if our love to God ſhall be found attended with ſenſible ardors? Nay, is it poſſible, in a right and unconſtrained ſtate of the mind, to contemplate the moſt glorious of all beings, without emotion? That Being, whom we diſcover in his works, by the diſplay of the moſt aſtoniſhing powers and perfections! unerring wiſdom, perfect goodneſs, almighty power! The bleſſed, unchangeable, original Being! The great univerſal genius, all order, harmony, and love! *He is*, indeed, *love*; *and he that dwells in love, dwells in God, and God in him.* He is, in the higheſt ſenſe, love; which appears in the communication of being

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to ſuch numbers and variety of creatures; and in the proviſion not only made for the ſupport of life, but to render it delightful to them; it appears ſtill more, in the good and kind affections planted in the heart of man, which we cannot but delight in, and account lovely; but, above all, it appears in that *he ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten ſon, that whoſoever believeth in him might not periſh, but have eternal life.* Whoever has juſt apprehenſions of theſe things, and attends to them as he ought, muſt be conſcious of ſenſations ſuitable to them; and nature muſt be extremely out of order, if men are ſtrangers to theſe feelings. To conclude this head, the moſt important divine gifts and communications are thoſe of holy light, and of life and love, which neceſſarily flow from them. SERM. II.

But, that we may enter more fully into the meaning of this paſſage, and the ſpirit of the author; let us conſider, that as he muſt be ſuppoſed to ſpeak of thoſe divine communications, in which the ſervants of Chriſt rejoice, (and there is none of the ſacred writers that more frequently ſpeaks of theſe than he, or in ſtronger terms,) as he muſt, I ſay, be ſuppoſed to ſpeak of theſe communications; ſo the expreſſion naturally leads us to conſider the greatneſs of that Being, who is the object

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of the chriſtian faith, and of holy love. We read, in the verſe preceding the text, of the breadth, and the height, and the length, and the depth, and of knowing the love of Chriſt that paſſeth knowledge; and immediately it is added, that you may be filled with all the fulneſs of God. This connexion ſuggeſts to us that unmeaſurable expanſe, if I may uſe the expreſſion, deſcribed in the 18th verſe, as the fulneſs of God, with which believing minds are filled. *That we may know the height, and depth, and length and breadth, and know the love of Chriſt that paſſeth knowledge* The love of Chriſt is mentioned and repreſented as immenſe, becauſe it is in this that God is moſt fully diſcloſed; ſo that when we know the love of Chriſt, we beſt know and *are filled with the fulneſs of God. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God,* is ſeen moſt clearly and fully *in the face of Chriſt.* In him, and the councils of God for our redemption by him, we have the moſt affecting diſcoveries of divine perfection. When we know Chriſt, we know the Father: And it is by this knowledge that we attain to the fulneſs of God.

But, as was ſaid, the Apoſtle's way of expreſſing himſelf leads us to conſider the immenſity of that Being who is the object of the Chriſtian faith, and of holy love. It is very certain

certain that there is a wonderful capacity in the human mind; what is great, and magnificent, and ſublime, is highly pleaſing to it. In many objects, what it can at once fully comprehend within its graſp, it naturally grows weary of; cannot reſt in it; and by a noble impatience of limitation, ſtretches after the ſtill greater and higher in kind, or degree. So, the eye is not ſatisfied with ſeeing; and when the curious traveller has, with much toil and expence, and perhaps with much danger, ſurveyed one ſtrange region; his appetite is but whetted to ſee another. In ſo much that many under the power of this paſſion, have traverſed the greateſt part of the globe. Still, ſuppoſing curioſity as much ſatisfied as poſſible, with the knowledge of our earth, the diſpoſition would nevertheleſs remain; we would tranſport ourſelves, if we could, to other planets, to other ſyſtems. We are, it appears, ſo made and conſtituted, that if we had powers and liberty, the immenſity of ſpace, and all the worlds in it, would not be accounted too large a field for us: Thus, at leaſt, imagination loves to range. SECT. II.

I mention this caſt of the human mind, only to ſhew that it is formed for great objects of contemplation; and that what is little, and narrow, and circumſcribed, becomes a con-

SERM. II. finement to it. Now, in no one object will a ſenſe of full ſatisfaction be found, but in God. The attributes of the Deity, which for diſtinction ſake are called natural, ſuch as eternity, neceſſary exiſtence, the perfect knowledge of all things paſt, preſent and to come, at one view; unſearchable contrivance and wiſdom, omnipreſence, and irreſiſtible power; all theſe ſtrike the mind with the utmoſt admiration. We find ourſelves loſt, yet ſtill delighted, in the contemplation of them: ſuch knowledge is too wonderful for us, it is ſo high we cannot attain to it. How great that Being who fills immenſity! who is *from everlaſting to everlaſting, God, without variableneſs or ſhadow of turning!* Of whoſe exiſtence no cauſe or reaſon can be aſſigned! But more eſpecially when we turn our thoughts to the goodneſs of God; that goodneſs which gave birth to the whole creation, to all the worlds that ſubſiſt in the immenſity of ſpace, and all the creatures in them; a goodneſs under the influence of which, and directed by infinite wiſdom, almighty power is exerted eternally! Farther, when it is conſidered that this goodneſs is eſſential to God, and unchangeable; that there is no limit to the exerciſe of it, but what unerring wiſdom preſcribes; that is, in truth, no limit at all; for wiſdom

wisdom directs only to what is really good, and to deviate from this would not be goodness: when it is considered that all worlds have their existence in this almighty and all-good Being; that every creature in the intellectual and moral, in the animal and material world, is under his notice and care; that there is a richness of bounty in him, which knows no bounds but the capacity of the receiver; that this boundless munificence will amply provide for the good of the creation he has made; that all this goodness cannot but be perfectly disinterested and free; that, therefore, it is pure, faithful, every thing that one can wish in the being who is Lord of all; and which is summed up, in the scripture style, in the word Holiness;—I say, when all this is considered, it presents an object every way suitable to the best state of the human soul, and all its faculties.

Let us now consider, with what exalted delight and veneration, a mind prepared by the diffusion of holy light and love, must contemplate this most glorious object. Such a mind, conscious of integrity, persuaded of the favour of God, as the moral governor of the world, free from painful, servile dread, and confident in God as an eternal friend; with what sacred joy; with what a sense of

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Sermon III. pure bliſs muſt it overflow! How will the whole ſoul be full of Deity, as an holy temple conſecrated to his ſervice! Who of angels, or of men, can expreſs this? But it is enough that the more the heart is thus filled, the more perfectly will the image of God be drawn: ſtill the more like him men will become, in all worthy diſpoſitions; the more will nature be perfected; the more will the heart be enlarged; and from the exerciſe of every good affection, a ſacred and chaſte pleaſure will, on every hand, flow into the ſoul. This is indeed to be filled with all the fulneſs of God!

And ſuch muſt be this ſenſe of fulneſs and ſatisfaction, as no other ſtate of the mind, no other object can poſſibly yield: for it is not only the moſt excellent and glorious object that fills the mind; but there is alſo an appropriation of him, as the certain, eternal, unchangeable ſource of happineſs. In this the ſpirit reſts with moſt perfect tranquility; it feels itſelf happy; and, while the mind is full of God, nothing that is gloomy, or diſquieting can take place; there muſt be a perfect ſerenity, and a full contentment. Here, indeed, the ſenſations alone of men of virtue, and who are beſt acquainted with the divine life, can fully illuſtrate all this to them: yet,

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even from the principles of reaſon, it muſt Sect.
appear, that this is the happieſt and moſt II.
pleaſing ſtate of the mind imaginable. Let Fancy, for example, frame to it ſelf a ſcene of the greateſt external and ſenſual enjoyment; ſtill when it has enriched and varied this ſcene to the utmoſt, it will appear no better than vanity and vexation of ſpirit, when compared with the fulneſs of God; for in none of theſe things can the human mind reſt. And let thoſe who are ſtrangers to the divine life, ſuffer themſelves to be perſuaded, for it is certainly true, that no ſatisfaction or joy they ever taſted, is equal to what the divine life affords. And that all are the greateſt loſers who are eſtranged from this life, whatever other things they may poſſeſs. I ſpeak not now of the preference of ſpiritual to other joys, on account of the ſhort duration and uncertainty of the latter; but, on the ſuppoſition they were to continue with us for ever, yet are they nothing when laid in the balance with what our author calls the fulneſs of God. This, it is hoped, muſt appear to the attentive mind, from the reaſoning in this diſcourſe; in which I hope there has been nothing ſaid, either wild, or weakly enthuſiaſtic; nothing but what is conſiſtent with the words of truth and ſoberneſs. Let it ever then be

our

ſtudy, and our prayer, that *Chriſt may dwell in our hearts by faith; that we being rooted and grounded in love, may comprehend with all ſaints, what is the length, and breadth, and height, and depth, and know the love of Chriſt that paſſeth knowledge, and be filled with all the fulneſs of God.* So much may ſuffice by way of explanation of this happy ſtate of mind. We ſhall now make ſome practical obſervations upon this ſubject.

The firſt then, and that upon which I mainly inſiſt, is this; that we ought with great care, to cultivate devout affections; and apply ourſelves to thoſe exerciſes, by which an intercourſe with Heaven is maintained, and fellowſhip with God: ſuch are principally, religious meditation and prayer. This is certainly the way to be full of God, and conſequently of true happineſs. It is commonly allowed, and very juſtly, that prayer, and ſuch other ſervices of devotion, are not preſcribed to us on account of any advantage they can procure to our Creator; for *He is not worſhiped with the hands of men as though he needed any thing*; we are therefore to conſider them only as means deſigned for ſerving a certain end, namely to excite and keep up in us worthy and good affections, the perfection and happineſs of our nature; and as a preſervative

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from vice and perdition: nor can religious ſervices be of any value, but as they anſwer theſe purpoſes. Now though this is, indeed, very true, conſequences however have been drawn from it, that are very falſe; particularly, that the whole of religion, that is of real worth, conſiſts in probity of mind, in good diſpoſitions and behaviour towards our neighbours; and that where theſe are found, religious exerciſes are but little, if at all, uſeful; and that a conſtant and ſerious application to them, is really ſuperſtitious. As the natural effect of this way of thinking, a very wide difference may be diſcerned between our taſte and way, and that of our predeceſſors. A great part of their religious buſineſs lay in the labours of the cloſet; and in a ſolicitous attendance upon other religious ſervices: whereas we have learned to be very indifferent as to theſe things, and eaſy in the neglect of them.

But if we will think juſtly on this ſubject, without queſtion, we ſhall find an extreme defect on our ſide. Do but conſider, how natural it is to pay the utmoſt deference and veneration to the Divine Being; and to take all proper occaſions of expreſſing it. Is not this what we owe him? Is it not at leaſt, as juſt and equal as to pay regard to diſtinguiſhed worth

ſenſe of worth in our fellow creatures? And will not
III. that ſenſe of worth, and that affection which determines us to this, as naturally determine us to pay the utmoſt regard to that Being, whoſe worth and excellence are quite peerleſs, and to do him the utmoſt honour? We read of ſome in whoſe thoughts God is not at all; though they know he is their conſtant benefactor; though they admit that he is excellent and worthy, infinitely above all other beings. Now, can any character be more unnatural than this? And how can men who at all think, excuſe themſelves for any approaches towards it? To be utterly forgetful of God! does not this ſound moſt harſhly; and ſpeak, at once, the greateſt abſurdity, and a diſingenuous temper? On the other hand, when we think what God is in himſelf, and what he is to us; is it not natural that there ſhould be a conſtant diſpoſition to turn the thoughts to him, with a moſt dutiful and affectionate regard? To the God who loves us; who is conſtantly doing us good, and in whom we live, and move, and have our being! and whenever we find a diſinclination to this, muſt not the mind be in an unnatural ſtate? In the holy ſcriptures, in which there appears to be a very thorough acquaintance with human nature, we have the duty of prayer very

frequently

frequently inculcated upon us; we are taught *always to pray always; to be instant in prayer; to continue in it with thanksgiving*; and who can say that this is not a just homage to our Creator! Is it to be supposed that men really love him, and at the same time, continue negligent of these exercises? I shall suppose a person to have arrived to a great pitch of virtue; and that he little needs those exercises for the improvement of his own mind, in this respect; yet are they not proper expressions of love, and gratitude to the Divine Being? and will not love and gratitude to him, very naturally express themselves in acts of devotion? But, alas! it is to be feared, they are but few, very few, who have attained to such a perfection in virtue, that they have no need of religious services, as the means of advancing them in it; one would rather suspect that their neglect of these is owing to a defect with respect to virtue: for, surely, a mind thoroughly disciplined and good, will love God; and the person who really loves God, must take pleasure in meditating on him, and in fellowship with him. There is indeed a great folly in that superstition which piques itself on many religious services, so called; and in a regular and laboured course of devotion, without attending to the true design of them; which rests upon it,

SERM. II. as if merely by the performance of the ſervice, God were pleaſed; and the whole end of religion anſwered. But, certain it is, the other extreme is as unnatural, as well as very dangerous.

But then we are to conſider farther, that it is natural to take pleaſure in thoſe exerciſes here recommended, as what yield the moſt ſubſtantial joy and ſatisfaction. We turn our thoughts to God, as the object of our higheſt delight and bliſs; and wherever it is felt what it is to be filled with the fulneſs of God, ſurely, no other incentive to acts of devotion will be needed. The ſacred writers do very frequently and ſignificantly expreſs this; *Then will I go*, ſays the Pſalmiſt, *to the altars of God; to God my exceeding joy.* And again, *One day in thy courts is better than a thouſand. It is better to be a door keeper in the houſe of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedneſs.* Can it be, that there is really the higheſt pleaſure and ſatisfaction in fellowſhip with God, in religious ſervices; that men too ſhall be ſenſible of this, and yet remain diſinclined to them? no certainly. If there be ſuch a diſinclination, men either do not really believe that there is ſuch a joy in the fulneſs of God; or elſe have no taſte for it.

It has often occurred to my thoughts on this ſubject, how much pleaſure men take in converſing

converſing with each other, where there is hearty love and friendſhip. Every face is chearful, and the heart is glad; the hours paſs inſenſibly; and the entertainment, as it is natural and innocent, ſo it is really one of the principal in human life. And where is it ſeen, that men of ſocial ſpirits need incentives to this ſocial intercourſe? How naturally does a man run into the company and converſation of his dear friends? Now what is this owing to but love? A man, indeed, goes with reluctance into company which he diſlikes. And is not the reverſe equally true; that, in fact, a man muſt diſlike that company which he ſeldom or never aſſociates with? How obviouſly applicable this, to the ſubject of our converſe with God! *&c.* SERM. II.

SERMON III.

The neceſſity of giving the heart to wiſdom; the power the mind has over its affections; and the means by which it may raiſe and regulate them.

PROVERBS XXIII. 26.

My ſon give me thine heart, and let thine eyes obſerve my ways.

SERM. III. THE wiſe author of this book has laid together a great many excellent maxims for the conduct of life; not only with reſpect to the great ends of it, which can be ſerved no otherwiſe than by the practice of virtue, a thing he every where inculcates under the name of wiſdom; but alſo with reſpect to thoſe meaſures by which the conveniences and

and comforts of life, in the ſeveral ſtages and circumſtances of it, may be obtained. And it will be evident to every one, who reads the book with attention, that it ſhews a thorough knowledge of human nature, and particularly of the paſſions of the heart; as likewiſe, of what will make men ſatisfied, by yielding them the moſt perfect fruition of life. The author gives many of his exhortations in the perſon of a parent; expreſſing great affection and tenderneſs, and a ſolicitude that all ſhould obſerve his inſtructions. He ſpeaks as to his children; whoſe true intereſts he would by all means promote; and in whoſe happineſs he was deeply concerned. So, in the text, *My ſon give me thine heart, and let thine eyes obſerve my ways.* Give me thine heart. Follow the directions I give thee, with a hearty and thorough inclination, with a full purpoſe of ſoul, and a chearful affectionate compliance, as to a matter which is cordially choſen, and purſued with delight.

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More needs not be ſaid for explaining this phraſe; as every one knows the difference there is between doing a thing with reluctance, and doing it from the heart; between performing the commands of a ſuperior againſt the grain, ſo to ſpeak, by an obedience irkſome and grievous; and, on the contrary,

Serm. III. performing them with pleasure, as from cordial choice, and therefore with affectionate zeal.

But it is of great importance that we should have a thorough satisfaction, as to the reasonableness of this exhortation. For at first sight, it seems not very well to consist with what all men are agreed in, namely, that our affections and inclinations are not in our own power; meaning, that we cannot regulate and dispose of them by a mere volition of our minds; or, which is the same thing, by an act of our will. Thus, let any man try whether he can, by an act of his will, raise or suppress a passion or affection of his mind, as he can the motion of a limb; and he will find he cannot. On the contrary, inclinations and passions are found to haunt men when they are most vexatious and uneasy to them, so that they would gladly get rid of them, almost at any expence. Doubtless we are so framed, that, upon the appearance of the object to our senses, or in our imaginations, the corresponding affection is excited in our minds. And thus far, we do not find ourselves voluntary agents, but are really passive. We cannot, at pleasure, excite an affection; neither can we, at pleasure, dismiss it. If so, how then should any affection be the subject of a command;

mand; or how is it agreeable to the nature of things that this author ſhould exhort men to give him their hearts, or, which is juſt the ſame, give their hearts to wiſdom, and the practice of virtue? This I ſhall endeavour, in the preſent diſcourſe, very particularly to explain; and then ſhew the great advantages that follow upon ſuch a ſurrender of the heart to wiſdom, as is here required. SERM. III.

And firſt, as was ſaid above, it muſt be owned, for it is to every man a matter of feeling, that we cannot, merely by an act of the will, regulate our affections, give our hearts to, or take them off from, any object. We find, indeed, that we can ſo order the motions of our limbs, and move them or keep them at reſt, juſt as we will; but the heart and affections are not in this manner at command. Thus we find, upon many occaſions, that our endeavours to excite a good affection, are not at all attended with immediate ſucceſs, however earneſt and ſtrenuous: the mind, inſtead of being moved as we would have it, often appears immoveable: juſt ſo, when we would ſuppreſs a turbulent and unruly paſſion, our endeavours, perhaps are ſo far from being immediately ſucceſsful, that the paſſion ſeems rather to be exaſperated by them.

But yet, notwithſtanding this, we muſt not infer, that we are ſo unhappily framed, as to

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be incapable, by any endeavours, to regulate our affections aright. Were this the case, their being irregular, and tumultuous, and bad, would be our misfortune only, and not our fault; which no wise man will assert; for it saps all the foundations of morality and religion, at once. We therefore may lay it down as a principle, that the human nature is furnished like all other things, with all the necessary means of attaining its own perfection; and, consequently, with the means of forming and directing the heart and affections aright; which is certainly the main thing. To say otherwise, would be to say that God had dealt worse with mankind, than with any other order of life; and had placed the noblest work of his hand, in this world, in the most pitiable and helpless condition. But to clear this matter fully, we need only look into the frame and workings of our own minds.

Have we not met with many instances in which men have been greatly prejudiced against certain moral characters, and other objects; so as to have a very thorough aversion against them. These prejudices have arisen from mistake; and the aversions founded upon them have been unjust. And when we have reasoned with them and convinced them of their errors, the aversion they had conceived has been quite removed.

removed. While they were under the power of ſuch prejudice, they could not poſſibly command away that averſion; it is only the removal of the prejudice which puts an end to the averſion. In the ſame manner, men's miſtaken fondneſs for certain objects, and characters, may be changed into a diſlike, not by the application of any power to the affection, immediately, of which we have no idea; but by ſetting the object in a true light, which had appeared to the mind in a falſe. Such then is really the conſtitution of our nature, that as the amiable and the excellent conſtitute the object of our eſteem and love, the deformed and vile, the object of our averſion; ſo, when things appear to us in a falſe light, reaſon ſhould interpoſe to correct our miſtakes; and to give us ſuch an eſtimation of things, as is agreeable to truth and nature. And ſurely, as we can by reaſoning, and information, influence the hearts and affections of others, ſo we can by ſerious and continued attention, influence our own hearts. Have we not often found this ſo in experience? though we could not immediately diſcharge a paſſion, or a prejudice; yet have we not been able to reaſon it away? Have we not, by cloſe attention and reaſoning, ſet things in ſuch a light to our minds, that affections

Sect. 2. which had obtained in them, and were wrong,
III. have given way to ſuch as truth and nature approved? He that knows nothing of this in experience, muſt needs be a very great ſtranger to the diſcipline of the heart.

No doubt where affections are not originally in the heart, no endeavours of ours, will raiſe them; and poſſibly, ſome men are of ſo defective a compoſition, that they are really without certain affections of human nature; or, if they have them at all, they have them not in ſuch ſtrength as to appear; which is the ſame thing to the purpoſes of human life, as being quite without them. But, admitting this, in ſome inſtances, to be undeniable fact, it is no more than what we ſee verified in ſimilar inſtances. Thus, ſome men are ſo void of a muſical ear, that no inſtruction or diſcipline can give it them: ſo alſo are others, quite inſenſible of the beauties of poetry and painting. Nay, ſome we find ſo unfortunately circumſtanced, that with all the external parts and appearances of the ſpecies, yet they have no underſtanding, and are capable of no improvement. But then we are not to form a judgment of human nature from theſe præternatural appearances: And where there are original remedileſs defects, either in the underſtanding or affections,

God

God knows how to deal graciouſly with his own creatures. Still however in general, as face anſwereth to face, ſo doth the heart of man to man. The human conſtitution, as to parts and faculties, is much the ſame in all; though in the degree of perfection there is an unſpeakable variety. On the whole, it may be laid down as a general maxim, that, by means of our rational powers, we have great influence upon our affections. Thus, if we are conſcious to ourſelves of being defective in eſteem and love to an object every way worthy of it, nature will direct us, if we labour under unjuſt prejudices, to remove them, by reaſoning with ourſelves, and correcting the errors of the moral eye. But if that defect of eſteem and love is owing to negligence and inattention, reaſon will direct us to view and converſe with that object frequently and attentively, that what is lovely in it may ſtrike our imaginations, and penetrate our hearts; for experience teaches, that preſenting the object thus to the mind frequently and with attention, will excite an affection we felt not before; or render it, if it obtained to ſome degree before, much ſtronger. In the ſame manner, our unreaſonable averſions ariſing from prejudice, may be worn

Sect. III.

SERM. worn off; and a careful application of ratio-
III. nal powers to that purpoſe will be ſucceſsful.

To apply all this to the preſent ſubject. No man can reſiſt the powerful attraction of wiſdom in Solomon's ſenſe of the word, that is to ſay, virtue; no man, I ſay, can reſiſt it, who is not under the power of prejudice. It is certainly, in itſelf, a moſt lovely and deſirable form. It is, at the ſame time, fruitful to us of the very greateſt advantages both in this, and in the life to come. For the practice of it we were originally framed; and it is indeed our glory and happineſs. Now, whence ſhould our prejudices againſt it ariſe? Muſt they not, from wrong notions and biaſſes in the mind? From darkneſs and ignorance in which we are bewildered; or from the prevailing of vicious affections? What then are men to do in this caſe, men that have, in general, a ſenſe that they are wrong, and yet do not find they can immediately excite right affections in their hearts? Are they not to ſet themſelves down, and think ſeriouſly? To reaſon with themſelves upon the baſeneſs of vicious affection, and the danger that attends it; upon the ſolid gain there is in true virtue and religion; upon the dignity and decency of a worthy and good life? repreſenting all theſe things to themſelves in the ſtrongeſt light,

light, till wiſdom enters into the heart; and Serm.
with their own endeavours, in the application III.
of their rational powers, joining fervent prayer to God, who is the fountain of light, for thoſe communications that may help them to a right moral diſcernment; at the ſame time, ſetting themſelves to make the experiment in practice, and trying whether wiſdom's ways be not the ways of pleaſantneſs and peace. Experience proves that ſuch methods, purſued with diligence and perſevered in, will quite alter the courſe of the affections, ſo that men ſhall love, and cordially embrace, what was before their averſion; and ſhall with diſdain reject, and abominate what they before delighted in. The inmoſt ſoul, the heart, will thus be changed; and one may venture to affirm, that the ſtrongeſt prejudices againſt virtue, and in favour of vice, will give way to ſuch application reſolutely continued in. It is indeed true, that the moſt important principles of morality and religion may paſs daily through the minds of men; they may underſtand them; they may be able to demonſtrate very clearly the truth of them; they may know the divine perfections; the meaſures of the divine adminiſtration; the frame of human nature, and the obligations to religious obedience; the final iſſues of life,

in

Sermon III. in happiness to the upright and worthy; and in misery, to the impenitent workers of iniquity; and yet not at all be suitably affected. But there is a vast difference between cold speculations of this kind, and a close and serious attention frequently repeated. It is this latter that gives sacred truth possession of the heart. Meditating till men see, and till they feel; for there is certainly a power in light to give, in other words, to suppress vile affections, and to excite the contrary. And this I take to be the main thing incumbent upon us, as the means of changing the heart, and gaining the victory over ourselves.

When we are required then to give our hearts to wisdom, we are not required to do any thing but what is plainly practicable by every man; that is, to use the means which are proper, and which God and nature have afforded for raising good affections in the heart. And let any man, conscious to himself that he has not those affections, and that he does not in his heart love virtue, but loves a licentious course of life; let him, I say, examine himself, and he will undoubtedly find, that he has not used the means, to which he has been directed, with application and constancy. Can he say that he has, often and seriously, meditated upon the principles of religion? That he has given them full

full ſcope in his thoughts and imagination? That he has, from time to time, given due attention of mind to them? That he has gone through the many important particulars which preſent themſelves to conſideration, with care? That he has, often and fervently, called upon God for the illumination of his holy ſpirit? That he has done all this with as great earneſtneſs as he would purſue ſome favourite wordly intereſt, and that all proved ineffectual? If this be in truth ſo, all the preceding arguments muſt be given up; but if no ſuch inſtance can be produced, they muſt ſtand in their full ſtrength. Upon the whole, there may be a conviction of the neceſſity of virtue to our happineſs, in the underſtanding, while the heart is alienated from it; but that alienation is a diſtemper which however deplorable, yet manifeſtly admits of remedy. So then it is not at all improper that we ſhould be exhorted to give our hearts to wiſdom. And the true way to attain this point is, in the words of the author, that our eyes ſhould obſerve the ways of wiſdom.

What I have ſaid concerning the admitting of wiſdom into our hearts, as what may be reaſonably the ſubject of a command, is juſtified by many paſſages in ſcripture; wherein the exerciſe of good affection is acquired as

our

ſame our duty. For example, we are commanded *to love the Lord with all our hearts, our ſoul, and ſtrength; and to love our neighbours as ourſelves*; we are *exhorted to rejoice with them that rejoice, to weep with them that weep*; *and to be tenderly affectioned one to another*. Now every one will ſee that the meaning of all this is not that we can excite, or rather create, an affection that is not originally planted in our hearts: or that we can merely by an act of our wills excite any affection; but the plain meaning is this, that we ſhould endeavour to ſet the objects of affection in ſuch a light to the mind, that we ſhould ſo attend to them, as is requiſite, according to the frame of our nature, to raiſe the good affections into exereiſe. This is all that we are capable of doing; and this properly done, certainly will be ſucceſsful. Which is all that needs to be ſaid for explaining the exhortation in the text, *my ſon give me thy heart*.

I am now, in the ſecond place, to lay before you the great advantages that will attend our doing ſo.

It will be evident to every one who conſiders theſe things ſeriouſly, that true religion has its ſeat in the heart; *in the inner man*, as the ſcriptures often ſpeak. Indeed, it muſt be ſo; for true religion conſiſts in the love of God,

God, and *charity out of a pure heart, out of a good conſcience, and faith unfeigned*; in a word, it conſiſts in worthy and good affections and behaviour towards God and our fellow creatures. Hence it evidently appears, that if we do not give our hearts to wiſdom, we have nothing that can be properly termed religion. External ritual ſervices, performed without good affections, are of no avail to the ends of religion, nor can poſſibly be accepted of God. Some bad things avoided, and ſome good things done, merely to ſtill the clamours of natural conſcience, will by no means do. Theſe are far from that uniform ſubmiſſion to the will of God, which is the natural effect of a cordial choice; in purſuance of which, the powers of the mind are applied to the purpoſes of religion, with diligence and conſtancy; and this indeed is what only deſerves the name of religion. In ſhort, nothing elſe will avail, while the heart is not ſo under the power of good principles, as to exert a ſtrong and cordial reſolution of doing the will of God. Where this is the caſe, and men have ſet their hearts to the practice of virtue, they will find themſelves in a ſtate, attended with great advantages: To enumerate all which far exceeds the compaſs of this diſcourſe. I ſhall then, only take

Serm. III.

notice

SERM. III. notice of two particulars; in the illustration of which the remaining part of the discourse shall be employed.

And first, men, by giving their hearts to wisdom, will find themselves prepared to do their duty, with ease and satisfaction; secondly, they will thus be sure of success. First, I say, men will find themselves prepared to do their duty with ease and satisfaction.

Every one is sensible that what he goes about with aversion, and reluctance, however in itself easy, is to him all burthen, all fatigue. Whereas when men engage in a service that has real difficulty in it, yet, when the heart is bent to it, and to serve the end designed by such service, difficulties, though very great, do not daunt them; they engage with vigour, and generally perform with success; but where there is a fluctuation in the mind, and the resolution not fixed; much more, where there is a dislike of the business in hand, and an aversion against it; then every difficulty becomes insurmountable. Thus it is in the common affairs of life; and thus it must be, especially in the affairs of religion; in which the internal dispositions are concerned, more than any external act.

The truth is, one would imagine, in considering the excellency of virtue and religion, namely,

namely, how much the perfection of human nature, and our real happineſs conſiſt in it; how happily the faculties and powers of the mind are adapted to the practice of it; and what peace and pleaſure may be expected to attend it; one, I ſay, in conſidering theſe things, would imagine that the human heart ſhould, without any difficulty, conſent to the dictates of wiſdom, and moſt ſtedfaſtly cleave to it. However, it is found, in manifold inſtances, quite otherwiſe. Here the fleſh *luſteth againſt the ſpirit*, as *the ſpirit againſt the fleſh*; *and theſe are contrary the one to the other, ſo that* men *cannot do the things they would.* The inclinations and deſires of animal nature become ſtrong and irregular; *the luſts of the eye and of the fleſh, and the pride of life*, hurry men impetuouſly, without deliberation, and without light. By giving way to the exorbitancies of theſe, conſcience is injured; the moral ſtate is depraved; and the worthieſt and beſt affections are ſuppreſſed. So that when, by a continued licence indulged to fleſhly luſts, and a worldly ſpirit, men get into bad habits, it is not to be expreſſed what ſtrength this gives to irregular inclinations and deſires; by the conſtant prevalency of which the moral powers are quite enfeebled; conſcience is robbed of that ſu-

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Serm. III. premacy which, in the conſtitution of nature, is evidently intended for it; and, by degrees, the ſoul is brought into the moſt ignoble of all bondage. This perverſe caſt of mind is ſeen ſometimes ſo to prevail, that not only good deſires and diſpoſitions are baniſhed, but men ſeem even almoſt to have loſt the original ſenſe of good and evil.

Now, it is plain from this, that in proportion to the ſtrength of vicious habits and affections, ſo will be the difficulty and reluctancy that men ſhall find, in attempting to reform their lives: And no wonder in many characters, this ſhould be exceeding great. For, in ſuch the imagination is quite depraved; *the light that is in them is become darkneſs*; and the luſts to which they have ſubjected themſelves, reign over them with the moſt tyrannical ſway. Still, however, it muſt be owned, that this difficulty does not ariſe, properly ſpeaking, from nature, but from the perverſion of it; and from a depravity of ſpirit that men have contracted. So that, if it is poſſible to ſubdue this perverſity, and reſcue nature from the unhappy ſervitude to ſin; if it is poſſible to redeem the heart from the power of vicious affections, then will the buſineſs of religion go eaſily and ſucceſsfully on.

But

But all this is undoubtedly poſſible; for it is known, in many inſtances, to be ſuch. And the means of effecting it have been, in the former part of this diſcourſe, laid before you, namely, frequent communing with our own hearts; diſjoining the falſe aſſociations of ideas, which have led us aſtray; cloſe and ſerious attention alſo to ſacred truth, by which our prejudices may be removed; and, to ſum up all, fervent prayer to the Father of lights, for his aſſiſtance, and the illumination of his holy ſpirit. When by theſe methods, a thorough conviction is worked upon the mind, of what we ought to do, when cordial and firm reſolutions are formed, and the heart is now engaged on the ſide of virtue, then is the main point carried; and men enter into a war againſt ſinful luſts with pleaſing hope, becauſe they do it with full purpoſe of ſoul. SERM. IIII.

Thus, in purſuance of an immediate application to the mortifying of evil diſpoſitions, and ſubduing corrupt habits, the ſtrength of both goes, by degrees, to decay; the moral powers exert themſelves with vigour; men begin to reliſh the pure joys of religion and virtue; and, by a diligent application and a reſolved perſeverance in well doing, all the influence and ſtrength of habit goes over to the ſide of virtuous and good affections. Thus

Sermon III. the practice of religion will become not only tolerable, not only eaſy, but indeed delightful. The mind becomes fixed in that temper which is proper and natural; it acts with freedom, with tranquility, with aſſured hope.

The meaning however of all this, is not, that, upon the ſurrender of the heart to wiſdom, all difficulties are intirely removed at firſt; or indeed ſhall be, in any part of our courſe. The beſt men may have their ſeveral trials, of various ſorts; and may have from within or from without, many things that moleſt them, and even endanger their integrity. As the preſent is not the ſtate of perfection, ſo neither is it of uninterrupted eaſe and peace. But the meaning is this, that men may be ſo fixed in the ways of virtue, their courſe in general may be ſo uniform, their taſte for ſacred joy ſo formed and ſtrengthened, and ſinful luſts ſo weakened; that they are prepared to go on in well doing, not only without painful reluctance, but with joy and ſatisfaction. As this is indeed a matter of great importance; for the farther illuſtration of it, let a perſon of real worth, and in whom the pure and good affections have had long an aſcendant, let ſuch an one think how he could reliſh life, ſhould he again run into the vicious practices of which he

he himſelf has been perhaps ſometimes guilty; and with which he ſees others every day pollute themſelves, and take pleaſure, nay, even glory in them; this perſon will certainly find his reluctance againſt vice ſo ſtrong, that he could not only not enjoy himſelf in a wicked courſe of life; but that he would rather loſe exiſtence than ſink into ſuch a ſtate. And it would be undoubtedly perceived, if a compariſon could be exactly made, that the abhorrence of a good mind at vice, is far ſtronger than any reluctance of a bad mind againſt virtue. In truth, it muſt be ſo, becauſe here good men have truth and nature upon their ſide; it is not prejudice, but nature itſelf that works. But though ſuch a compariſon cannot be exactly made, yet every ingenuous and good mind muſt be ſenſible of ſuch an abhorrence of groſs vice, and of indignation againſt it, that he would not, for the world, be under the power of it. Now, this is a ſubſtantial proof that when the mind is in a proper ſtate, virtue is the cordial choice and delight of it; and that all our difficulties ariſe from miſtaken views, from prejudices, from that darkneſs and confuſion of mind which is owing to corrupt affections; and that when theſe obſtacles are removed, to be really good, will be the ſame as to be really happy. Would

Sect. III.

SERM. III. to God that this was impreſſed upon every of our minds, that righteouſneſs is the very food of the ſoul, and that we were as really made for the practice of virtue, and delight in it, indeed far more ſo than for the enjoyment of any animal delights! This perſuaſion is of the utmoſt ſervice: For the true reaſon why men of a licentious temper, and practice, do not care heartily to think of religion, or to attempt it in the ſtrictneſs of it, the true reaſon, I ſay, is, that they imagine they cannot enjoy life in it: They cannot have pleaſure, they cannot be happy and religious. I think there is nothing more demonſtrably falſe than this; nor any thing more true than that while the vicious are ſeeking after the greateſt happineſs, they wander quite out of the way to it.

There have prevailed, in ſome ages and nations of the world, principles and cuſtoms, under the notion of religion, that were indeed very unnatural and barbarous, and which the human heart in its beſt ſtate and temper muſt abhor. For inſtance, human ſacrifices were not uncommon; and men offered to their idols *the fruit of their bodies, for the ſin of their ſouls.* Great lewdneſs alſo and impurity were hallowed as ſacred rites in the ſervice of the Gods. Again, other religious cuſtoms,

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ſo called, were very laborious and inconvenient, and, at the ſame time, egregiouſly trifling. And as religion was thus abuſed among the Gentiles, ſo even the religion of the Jews, though of divine authority, yet (which was owing to the particular circumſtances of the times, and the genius of that people) it was in a great meaſure ritual; it was expenſive and difficult, inſomuch that the Apoſtle Peter calls it *a yoke, which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear.* The Apoſtle Paul likewiſe gives the Jewiſh ceremonial very degrading epithets, when compared with the Chriſtian ſervice. And indeed, from all theſe ſuperſtitions of the Heathen, from all the ſervitude of the Jews, the diſciples of Chriſt are delivered. They are called to the obedience of the pure law of nature; to that reaſonable ſervice for which the powers and affections of the mind are originally adapted; they have the moſt ingenuous additional motives to this obedience, from the love of God and the croſs of Chriſt; and they are encouraged, and invigorated, beyond all expreſſion, by the aſſurances of a happy immortality, and of a Divine efficacious aid in the way to it. Surely then, our natural powers and affections, turned into their proper channel, and urged on with ſuch aſſiſtan-

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Serm. III. ces, muſt produce great effects. But this leads to the ſecond thing propoſed, namely, that when men have given their hearts to wiſdom, they will be ſure of ſucceſs in the ways of it; ſure of anſwering the purpoſes of human life, and of being happy, here and hereafter.

It is a declaration of wiſdom, *that ſhe loves them that love her*, and that *they who ſeek her early*, in other words, that give her their hearts, *ſhall find her*. Our bleſſed Saviour alſo has aſſured us, *that they who hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs, ſhall be filled; that they who aſk ſhall receive, they who ſeek ſhall find, and to him who knocketh it ſhall be opened.* And it is the declared conſtitution of his kingdom, that to *them who ſeek the kingdom of God, in the firſt place, all other things ſhall be added.* No man, therefore, has any reaſon to ſuſpect his ſucceſs in the practice of religion, who ſets himſelf in good earneſt to it. For, the truth is, that according to the very conſtitution of the human mind, and the natural tendency of things, it is to be expected, *that the path of the juſt ſhall be as the ſhining light, ſhining more and more unto a perfect day.*

It holds in the conſtitution of animal life, that it is, in every ſpecies, happily furniſhed with thoſe powers and faculties, which are neceſſary

neceſſary to its own preſervation: This appears in numberleſs inſtances. But ſtill farther, when we look into the interior ſprings of life, though theſe are, in a great meaſure, myſtery to us, yet there is ſomething ſeen, in the dependency and connexion of things, very remarkable. Thus, from the heart, by a ſtrong and conſtant motion of that bowel, the blood is circulated through the whole body; but from that very blood, which flows from the heart, there is a fluid derived, the nervous fluid, by which the power of the heart itſelf is maintained; and it is perfectly known that when the courſe of that fluid is obſtructed, the motion of the heart ceaſes: So that there is in the cauſe of animal life, a circulation of power, and a mutual dependency of parts. The heart ſupplies the blood to thoſe veſſels by which the ſecretion is performed that preſerves and maintains the power of the heart itſelf. Now, there is ſomething in the moral conſtitution, and in the ſpiritual life., very analogous to this. Serm. III.

Good affections poſſeſſing the ſoul, puſh on the active powers to do that which is good: But in the very doing of this there is a reliſh of joy and pleaſure, that ſtill more engages the heart to virtue, and ſtrengthens the good affections: So that the more men

love

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love virtue, the more they will practiſe it; and the more they practiſe it, they will infallibly the more love it: And thus the love of virtue, and the practice of it, have a ſtrong mutual influence upon each other: The love of it prepares and excites to the practice; the practice increaſes and ſtrengthens the love.

Hence it is plain, that our ſpiritual life was intended to be progreſſive; and it will certainly prove ſo, if men do not expoſe themſelves, by their own unwatchfulneſs and fault, to what is a wound and injury to this life, and ſo an obſtruction of its progreſs. Juſt as the animal life, preſerved from hurtful accidents, and properly furniſhed with ſuſtenance, grows up to its own perfection; but is not certainly ſecured from what may obſtruct that progreſs, and utterly deſtroy life itſelf. So alſo, there are principles and powers in the moral life, which tend to a glorious perfection; yet this progreſſion may many ways be obſtructed; and it is too often ſeen to be ſo; but never without our own fault: For this is the peculiar happineſs of the moral and religious life, that nothing can be fatal to, indeed that nothing can hurt it, but our own negligence or wilful folly.

SERMON

SERMON IV.

The great ſimilarity of the individuals in the conſtituent and moſt valuable parts of Human Nature; their wonderful diverſity in other circumſtances, with uſeful reflexions ſuggeſted by this conſtitution.

PSALM xxxiii. and 15.

He faſhioneth their hearts alike:——

THE great ſubject of this Pſalm is the power and providence of the true God; who is celebrated as the ſole creator of the world, and as governing it by his counſel; for as *he ſpake*, at firſt, *and it was done*; as *he commanded, and it ſtood faſt*; ſo *he bringeth the counſel of the heathen to nought, he maketh the devices of the people of none effect; but the counſel*

SERM. IV. *counſel of the Lord ſtandeth for ever, the thoughts of the heart to all generations: The Lord looketh from heaven, he beholdeth all the children of men: From the place of his habitation, he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth; he faſhioneth their hearts alike, he conſidereth all their ways.* In the courſe of his providence he preſerveth the various ſpecies, from age to age; he formeth the heart of the individuals alike; or he alike formeth their hearts; that is, of one as well as of another. They are all the work of his own hand; and they are formed with that likeneſs to one another, which is neceſſary to conſtitute them the ſame kind; For *as in water face anſwereth to face, ſo doth the heart of man to man.* This is one ſtrong proof of a providence, that in the human ſpecies, ſo alſo we ſee it in the ſeveral kinds of the animal creation, and in all claſſes of the vegetable world, in which there is a vaſt variety; all the individuals of each ſpecies, (with an exception to a very few monſtrous productions) are made after one faſhion; with all the parts and powers which conſtitute that kind, like one another, and very different from all other kinds. And ſo they have been preſerved from the beginning of the creation, not one ſpecies loſt, nor any material confuſion introduced among them. Surely this cannot be the effect of chance; which,

which, in truth is a word, in this argument, of no meaning; nor can this ſimilarity be aſcribed to neceſſity; with which that variety which we alſo ſee in the works of nature, is utterly inconſiſtent; and, therefore, it remaineth that we aſcribe it to an intelligent power, acting ſteadily according to wiſe counſel and deſign. Sect. IV.

The likeneſs of the human form, in the ſeveral individuals of the ſpecies, the ſame parts and members of the body, the ſame powers and faculties of the mind, ſuch as underſtanding, will, memory, and affections, eſpecially thoſe of the moral kind; this likeneſs, I ſay, in the ſeveral individuals, is what conſtituteth one kind, or ſpecies; which yet is conſiſtent with a very great diverſity of the individuals from one another, by which each is diſtinguiſhed; having, to the eſſential powers which are common to all the ſpecies; certain things ſuperadded, by which a manifeſt difference is made; this diverſity likewiſe, is another very remarkable illuſtration of a providence, and to mankind extremely beneficial.

The intention of the preſent diſcourſe is, in ſome obvious particulars, which yet are of great moment, to repreſent to you this amazing likeneſs or ſimilarity in human nature; and,

Sect. IV. and, at the ſame time, the wonderful variety of things, partly natural, others of them adventitious, by which the individuals are diverſified; and then to make ſome uſeful obſervations upon this ſubject.

To proceed, when we ſee a living creature in the human form, with the ſame erect ſtature, the ſame countenance, the ſame make of the body and limbs, with ourſelves, we conclude that this is one of the ſame ſpecies. Yet ſhould we find upon inquiry, that this creature was without the powers of reaſon, without the affections of heart, without the moral powers, which we find in ourſelves, we ſhould ſcarcely think it proper to call ſuch a creature, man: For, what principally conſtitutes this ſpecies, is not the outward form, but the faculties and affections of the mind. In mankind, we expect to find underſtanding, judgment, counſel, and deſign, will, and choice in action; we expect to find paſſions and affections, love, joy, ſympathy, and the reſt. We equally expect to find the moral powers, a ſenſe of right and wrong, good and evil, and affections and determinations ſuitable to that ſenſe. I mention the moral powers, amongſt others, as an eſſential part of our frame, and as originally by our maker planted in us, becauſe it is a very great miſtake to imagine

imagine that our moral affections are the result of mere underſtanding, or reaſon, or judgment. In truth, the ſenſe of good and evil, and the manner in which the heart is affected by it, ſeem to have no neceſſary connexion with theſe. Our ideas of honeſt and juſt, of virtuous and good, we have immediately from our maker, with all thoſe feelings of the mind, which are produced by them; they cannot be the reſult merely of our reaſoning powers, more than any other ſimple ideas are. However, all theſe powers I have mentioned, joined together in one ſyſtem, and combined in the ſame creature, may be termed eſſential to humanity; and are found, more or leſs, in every individual. Indeed, as ſome come into the world imperfect, with reſpect to the external frame, or even monſtrous; ſo, perhaps it is not impoſſible, that there ſhould be, in ſome inſtances, ſuch defects in the powers of the mind, and what may be called a monſtrous production in that reſpect; but ſuch ſingular exceptions* are not of great account; as monſtrous productions in the animal frame are not, when compared with the far greater multitudes of the ſpecies who are of the natural form. God hath therefore *faſhioned our hearts alike*; with the ſame powers, the ſame affections and deſires; and a moſt curious ſyſ-

tem

ſtent they make, a very glorious frame! The Creator *hath made mankind a little lower than the angels, and crowned him with glory and honour.* But whatever excellency there may be in the original frame, you ſee it is, in the purpoſe of nature, common to all the individuals; a particular this, which ought to be much attended to; and which we ſhall afterwards have occaſion to conſider farther.

But yet, though *as in water face anſwereth to face, ſo doth the heart of man to man*; all the individuals being made alike, ſo far as to have the ſame eſſential powers; yet there is a moſt amazing diverſity among them, and in a great variety of inſtances: and a great deal of this diverſity is the work of nature: We ſee it in the countenance, which is not alike exactly in any two perſons; we may obſerve it too in the voice, and in other circumſtances. But then, what an amazing diverſity is found in the powers of the mind, in the temper and affections! Some men have excellent underſtanding, and ſound judgment; others are weak and injudicious; ſome have great quickneſs of apprehenſion; others are ſlow and heavy; here and there men are met with, of prodigious ſtrength of memory; others are extremely defective in that reſpect: So likewiſe, it manifeſtly is, with regard to the temper.

per. Some appear to be naturally gentle, and meek, and good; others are perverſe and froward; ſome are calm; others paſſionate; ſome proud and ſupercilious; others humble and obliging. And though culture, and diſcipline, may greatly mend a bad temper, and bad example and bad habits may greatly corrupt a good one; yet it is apparent that there is a ſtrain which is natural; and a temper, which we may be ſaid to bring into the world with us. SERM. IV.

As great a diverſity there is obſervable in the affections; ſome are ſeen to have a very great ſenſibility, an uncommon tenderneſs and delicacy; others are hardly to be worked upon; they cannot form an idea how their neighbours are, to ſuch a degree, affected by the joys or ſorrows of life. And thus, according to the variety of the paſſions, various characters turn up to us, as one or other of them hath the aſcendant. Very often too, the paſſion which hath the aſcendant in the natural complexion, retains that aſcendant, through the whole of life, and fixes a man's general character. So, for inſtance, one is under the power of *the luſts of the fleſh*; another is in conſtant ſervitude to thoſe *of the eye*; and others ſacrifice all to *the pride of life*. This diverſity, in many inſtances, may be, as hath been already hinted, aſcribed to nature, to a

SERM. IV. ſtrain which men are of, and a complexion they bring into the world with them.

But it is apparent that the temper and affections are capable of being greatly altered, either to the better, or to the worſe. What an amazing influence is culture and diſcipline, eſpecially religious diſcipline, ſeen to have upon men! Once they become acquainted with themſelves, and know what is incumbent upon them as men; once they are ſenſible of the ſovereignty veſted in conſcience, and of the ſubordination in which all paſſions and affections ought to be kept to that ſacred power; when once they exerciſe themſelves to maintain this government, and ſubordination in the heart, by a continued, reſolved ſelf-denial curbing irregular paſſions; and on the contrary, endeavour to cheriſh and ſtrengthen ſuch as are too weak in them; then will they make very great progreſs in correcting the temper, and in regulating the paſſions aright: Nature is indeed capable of very high improvement by ſuch diſcipline. On the other hand, how horribly may it be perverted by bad affections indulged, and gratified without reſtraint, by bad habits men have contracted, and which have a moſt amazing influence, by a ſtrength perhaps equal to that of nature itſelf! Indeed nature

is often blamed for what is the mere effect of habit; thus men become ſtrongly attached to things, and extremely fond of them, to which no man ever had a natural inclination at all: inſtances of this are needleſs. Again, what a diverſity of tincture do men take, from the converſation to which they are accuſtomed; from the buſineſs in life which they purſue; from the ſeveral ſtages of life, from infancy to old age; and from innumerable other things by which the temper is affected, and which become conſpicuous in the character. But particularly with reſpect to the moral character, though true worth is the ſame in all who have it, and though every man hath in his own heart a ſtandard of it; yet, of thoſe who are good, what a diverſity is there even in the degree of worth? What a diverſity from the moſt eminent, to the loweſt character; which may be called a worthy one? Beſides, what a diverſity in thoſe who are good, with reſpect to the particular virtues by which they are diſtinguiſhed? Patience, for example, in one, charity in another; ardent devotion in a third; and ſo in many other inſtances; men's religion and worth, generally ſpeaking, appearing much more eminent in ſome particulars, than in others, though they are in none eſſentially defective. But ſtill farther, when we conſi-

SERM. IV.

SERM. IV. der the multitudes in which there is ſuch a ſtrange mixture of good and evil, that the ſpectator hardly can pronounce the character, in general, either good or bad; when we conſider the infinite variety of humour, and of men's peculiar way in doing things, as well as of the ſtrange mixture of principles which are manifeſt in their actions; time would fail one in deſcribing all the diverſity which, from theſe cauſes variouſly combined, is ſeen in mankind. To all which may be added the diverſity of ſtation aſſigned to them in this world; wherein, from the beginning, there have been the rich and the poor, the high and low, the ruler and the ſubject, the honourable and the obſcure, *&c.* and will be to the end of time. We muſt reſt ſatisfied, at preſent, with juſt opening this ſpacious field to your view; for to trace out all the particulars, would be as unneceſſary as endleſs. However, you ſee, upon the whole, that as mankind are formed alike, with reſpect to thoſe powers and affections which are eſſential to human nature; ſo there is an infinite diverſity amongſt the individuals, in many other reſpects and which are of very great importance.

Having thus repreſented the ſtate of human nature as we now ſee it; I proceed to make ſome obſervations upon it.

And

And first, it is plain that there is a very great diversity amongst the individuals of mankind, which is the work of nature; or, to speak more properly, of God. The greater or lesser measure of natural abilities, the excellency of some persons, in one respect, and of some in another; the turn of the natural complexion and temper, with the ascendancy of some particular passions in it; a healthful or sickly constitution, with many other particulars in which we have no agency: All these are, in some measure, fixed and determined in the providence of God, independent of us. But yet when we consider these natural advantages of some individuals, over others; we shall find them of but small account, when compared with the privileges which are common to all the individuals of the species. Those powers and faculties which are essential to humanity, such as understanding, voluntary action, the sense of good and evil, and the powers of conscience, with those particular affections which, in a lesser or greater degree, are found in every one of the kind; those powers and faculties, I say, found in conjunction, make an excellent and lovely system; they make men capable of serving the great and common ends of human life; capable of being the subjects of God's moral government, of moral perfection, and

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SERM. IV. of the higheſt happineſs which, in the nature of things, is connected with it. The advantages of ſuperior degrees of wiſdom, of ſtrength, or other qualities by which ſome are diſtinguiſhed, are of little moment, when compared with thoſe general endowments by which all are originally rendered capable of attaining to the declared ends of life. To be poſſeſſed of the powers of humanity is the great thing; however, in the various diſtribution of theſe, one perſon, in ſome particulars, may greatly excel another. Our ſtate and endowments as men, are ſo great and excellent, that all diverſity of that kind is almoſt ſwallowed up, and loſt in compariſon. Let it be ſuppoſed, that a perſon is of underſtanding much inferior to others; of much leſs delicacy of imagination, and affection; labouring under great diſadvantages with reſpect to conſtitution, parentage, and other things which are little, or not at all in our power; yet ſtill this perſon is capable of labouring with ſucceſs after moral perfection; capable of the happineſs which is connected with it; capable of a moſt reputable appearance in the kingdom of God, and of the favour of his maker; capable, in a word, of the moſt valuable attainments, and in general, of the nobleſt ſtate, which thoſe who are diſtinguiſhed

guiſhed by the very greateſt abilities, can propoſe to themſelves. SERM. IV.

This is a moſt joyous thought. When God made us men, and members of his great moral family, he made us capable of, and put within our reach, the higheſt honour and bliſs, which we can wiſh; far indeed, above what we can form any idea of: That is, he has ſo made us, that by a proper improvement of the faculties with which we are furniſhed, we ſhall attain to them. Superior degrees of wiſdom and ability, of natural goodneſs of temper, and the like, no doubt command proportionable degrees of eſteem; but yet, that which is the original foundation of all honour and eſteem, muſt be of much greater value, than thoſe degrees in which ſome are ſuperior to others: In other words, what is eſſential to humanity, is of far greater value than any particular meaſure of endowments, by which one individual is diſtinguiſhed from another. How great, how valuable are our endowments and poſſeſſions, as we are men! and how does it become us to rejoice, in our common humanity! This will appear in a ſtronger light, when it is conſidered, that the higheſt degrees of glory to which we can attain, are much leſs connected with eminency in natural endowments, than

SERM. IV. with eminency in moral worth, in rectitude of ſpirit, in purity and goodneſs, in regularity and true ſanctity of life. For, we evidently ſee theſe are not the neceſſary attendants of diſtinguiſhed natural abilities; but the reſult of religious diſcipline, and a careful improvement of the talents committed to us. Now, can any man ſay he is cut off from theſe? or that he is incapable of them? He may be unfortunate in many reſpects, but yet capable of attaining to true worth, to high degrees of it, and to all that glory which ſhall finally crown it: That is, he is capable of a ſtate of the very higheſt dignity, to which human nature can aſpire. He then who formed *our hearts alike*, who planted in us the powers of reaſon and conſcience; hath, in a great meaſure, put us upon a level. Accordingly, we find our eſteem and love captivated principally, not by any thing of which one individual is poſſeſſed, and of which others are incapable, but by the moral character, in the dignity of which, the loweſt, as well as the higheſt (with reſpect to natural powers, and diſtinctions, which are independent of us) may hope to ſhine. Thus, to have a true ſenſe of the worth of human nature, and to have it ever in our minds, is exceeding profitable to us: It will naturally produce a true greatneſs

greatneſs of mind, the moſt diſtant thing, indeed, imaginable from pride; but which will prompt us to do worthy actions, to conduct ourſelves in an honourable manner, and the moſt remote from any thing mean and baſe: While, at the ſame time, it will make us pleaſed with our ſtate as men, thankful to our Creator, ſatisfied with his adminiſtration, and will greatly tend to ſecure us from the pains of envy at thoſe who are in ſuperior ſtations, or have ſuperior abilities; and from all diſpoſition to murmur againſt him who for wiſe purpoſes, has appointed all ſuch diſtinctions. SERM. IV.

Secondly, once we are ſatisfied with the ſtation we hold in the works of God, as men, as ſubjects of God's moral kingdom, and members of his family; and are capable of looking with impartiality, upon that variety which he hath appointed in the ſtate and lot of individuals, with reſpect to the meaſure of endowments, the ſtation they hold in life, and the different caſt of complexion and temper; we ſhall then ſee great wiſdom, and ſtrong characters of goodneſs, in this conſtitution. We are made, not for ſolitary, but for ſocial life; and in ſuch a ſtate, this diverſity ſerveth many excellent purpoſes. It produces a mutual dependence, and is the cement

Sect. IV. ment by which mankind, in their ſeveral aſſociations, are united together into one body. For inſtance, if one is diſtinguiſhed by wiſdom, another by ſtrength; wiſdom will then direct that ſtrength; by which, in return, it is itſelf defended. If ſome are formed for rule and government, others for ſubjection, and the lower offices of ſocial life; theſe are mutually ſerviceable to one another. And ſo with mutual advantage *the rich and poor meet together, the Lord is the maker of them all.* There is a manifeſt uſefulneſs to ſociety, in ſuch a diverſity of ſtation; the ſtations are ſuited to one another. The rich ſupport the poor, by employing them in the neceſſary labours of life; the poor, by performing thoſe neceſſary labours, ſupport the rich; and in the preſent ſtate of things, ſociety could not ſubſiſt, without this difference of condition. So, again, the grave and facetious, in the natural caſt of their tempers, the tender and delicate, with the hardy and leſs ſuſceptible of impreſſions, make a mixture in life, which miniſters both pleaſure and profit. What would become of all the fearful, of thoſe who are diſcompoſed at the firſt alarm, without the aſſiſtance of the brave and reſolved? how unhappy the effects of paſſion in ſome, without the meekneſs, the patience,

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and ſweetneſs of temper which is found in others. Thus is the ſyſtem, of which every one maketh a part, ordered with great wiſdom. Certain neceſſary ſervices for ſociety require particular talents; certain men, accordingly, are endowed with theſe talents. And we ſee men ſucceed happily, in one buſineſs and ſtation of life, who could have no ſucceſs at all in another. What the Apoſtle Paul, 1 *Cor. Chap.* xii. in a very beautiful allegory teacheth concerning the chriſtian church, may be applied to human ſociety in general: It may be conſidered as the natural body, the various members of which have a neceſſary connexion with, and dependence upon one another: Some poſſeſs the place of eyes, others of hands, and of feet, and the like. Now, theſe ſerving for quite different purpoſes, yet in conjunction, make a beautiful and harmonious ſyſtem: All are neceſſary, and the body could not ſubſiſt without ſuch a variety of members. From which the Apoſtle juſtly infers, that no one ought to be diſſatisfied with his own ſtation, or deſire that of others. *If the foot ſhall ſay, becauſe I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear ſhall ſay, becauſe I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?*

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Sect. IV. *body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the ſmelling? but now God hath ſet the members in the body every one as it hath pleaſed him; and if they were all one member where were the body? but now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot ſay to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again, the head to the foot, I have no need of you. Nay much more thoſe members of the body which ſeem to be more feeble, are neceſſary.* The ſum is, that God hath formed a ſyſtem, to the well being of which various ſervices are neceſſary, and a variety of powers adapted to them: Every member is to be ſatisfied with the ſtation and ſervice allotted to him, and with the endowments ſuitable to it. And as no one is to murmur at his own ſtation, ſo no one is to deſpiſe that of another. The great thing to be attended to by every man, is to act his own part well. In this conſiſteth his true dignity, and glory. And the ſupreme wiſdom, which orders all, hath given every man an opportunity of advancing himſelf in true worth, and goodneſs; which is the moſt excellent endowment, not only of mankind, but of all intelligent beings whatſoever.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, we may ſee from what hath been ſaid, how our eſteem of men ought to be regulated, and what are the juſt and natural meaſures of it. It has been obſerved, that thoſe powers and faculties which are eſſential to nature, and common to all mankind, as they are the foundation of every thing great and honourable, muſt therefore be of greater conſideration than any ſuperior degree of them by which one individual may be diſtinguiſhed from another; much more are they to be eſteemed above diſtinction of fortune, parentage, and ſtation in the world; which may be termed accidental, and have very little relation to the true dignity of human nature. The Apoſtle Peter teacheth, that we ſhould *honour all men*; honour them, as being men; and indeed, the wonderful frame of human nature cannot be contemplated ſeriouſly, without high admiration. No doubt, nature directs us to pay ſuperior regard to ſuch as are of very eminent abilities; but it is quite out of nature to pay ſuch regard to them, as to forget that others are likewiſe men. And ſtill much more unnatural is it to worſhip external ſtate and ſplendour, or other accidental uncommon advantages; as if indeed human nature was mean without them, or as if perſons deſtitute of them, were of ſome inferior ſpecies, Sect. 2. IV.

SERM. IV. ſpecies; and intituled to little or no honour at all. This certainly ſhews a narrowneſs of ſpirit, and underſtanding, which every ingenuous mind muſt abhor. Above all, how odious that kind of pride, which can treat human creatures as if they were brutes; nay often worſe indeed; as many ſhew that unnatural fondneſs which makes a favourite animal the object of greater care and tenderneſs, than their fellow creatures of the ſame ſpecies.

It is true, indeed, that as real worth and virtue are the greateſt glory and dignity of human nature, and lay a foundation for peculiar love and eſteem; ſo, men who are deſtitute of it, and therefore hardly deſerve the name of men, will be but little regarded by thoſe who judge aright; nay, when they appear not only deſtitute of true worth, but polluted with abominable crimes, which debaſe and defecrate nature; they muſt then, to the moral eye, in a proper ſtate, appear hateful. Whereas, on the contrary, when the powers and faculties of nature are hallowed by goodneſs of heart; when men, by religious diſcipline, are exalted to that ſtate which is the moſt honourable and lovely of the human kind; to ſuch perſons the higheſt eſteem is due, and the greateſt love: And not to

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pay them great regard, be their external cir- SERM. cumſtances ever ſo low, is quite unnatural; IV. and ſpeaketh an unworthy undiſcerning ſpirit. Surely men act moſt prepoſterouſly, when they overlook, or deſpiſe ſuch characters; while yet they pay high honour to mere external appearance; to the accidental advantages of perſons perhaps quite worthleſs: thus flattering a vain imagination, which takes the mere ſhadow for the ſubſtance; and diſgracing nature, while they pretend to exalt and adorn it; and ſo doing great hurt to thoſe who are the objects of this idol-worſhip; while at the ſame time they who pay it, incur the imputation of diſingenuity; or, at leaſt, diſcover great weakneſs.

Fourthly, let the conſideration of our fellowſhip in one nature, and that God hath made our hearts alike, recommend to us ſympathy, and tenderneſs for our fellow-creatures in diſtreſs. This is a moſt lovely affection of mind; and of the greateſt uſe in our preſent ſtate, in which we every where meet with objects of compaſſion. Every one of us knows, in ſome inſtance or other, what grief of heart, what pain and diſtreſs are; we know how agreeable the ſympathy of a tender friend is, and how ſoothing. How hardly do we think of perſons who have no bowels

of

Serm. of mercy! they appear undeſerving of all
IV. claim to humanity, and a reproach to nature.
Let us then learn, by what we expect from others, what we owe to them; let us ſhew that human nature is, in no individual, beneath our ſympathy, and kind offices, when it is in the power of our hand to miniſter relief. We ſhall always have pleaſure in the ſympathetic affection; nay the pain which attends it, hath ſomething in it agreeable to the heart; and the tender and good ſervices upon which it puts men, are pleaſing in the performance, and ever highly pleaſing upon reflexion. Beſides, what can equally recommend to us returns of love and pity from our neighbours, as a good and tender heart? What can ſo effectually ſecure to us the kindeſt offices, when we ſhall need them? He who ſhewed no compaſſion himſelf, is like to meet with little in the day of his calamity: while the kind and tender hearted, will be ſure to find friends: Human nature indeed, muſt have put off humanity, before it can be otherwiſe. We are moreover ſure that the exerciſe of this affection, with prudence and diſcretion, muſt be pleaſing to our maker; who planted it in us, and intended it as a protection and refuge, for the unfortunate and the miſerable.

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Many promiſes God hath made to the merciful and tender hearted; and no one but muſt conſider it as a wiſe and natural, as well as a moſt engaging repreſentation of the value of ſympathy and charity in the divine eſtimation; when, in his account of his own procedure as judge at the laſt day, our Saviour mentions only works of mercy, and charity, as the foundation upon which he receives the righteous; and the utter negligence of theſe compaſſionate offices, as that upon which he rejects and condemns the wicked. Who would not cultivate what, he is ſure, will make him lovely in the divine eye; what indeed muſt do ſo, for it is an imitation of his own goodneſs? God doth not look upon the poor and afflicted with a negligent and indifferent eye; misfortune and calamity render no man leſs noticeable to him; he judgeth not as man often doth. He knows the value of his own creation; he knows what human nature is, ſtripped of all accidental advantages; the man, the good man, in any ſtate, will be the object of his favour and delight. Let it then be our endeavour, to have our minds ſo formed, ſo attentive to what is truly worthy, ſo tender and compaſſionate to diſtreſſed worth; that they may, in this reſpect, be after the image of God, and bring forth

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Serm. IV. fruits which are to his glory. Let us cultivate, with all care, those kind affections which he will take such an honourable notice of, at the great day.

SERMON

SERMON V.

Moral perfection, the higheſt end and chief good of man, attainable by all.

PSALM xxxiii. and 15.

He faſhioneth their hearts alike:——

IN a former diſcourſe it was ſhewed you in what reſpects the individuals of the human kind are alike; as alſo the ſurpriſing diverſity among them, with which this likeneſs is conſiſtent. And having thus conſidered the ſtate of human nature, in theſe reſpects, we proceeded to make ſome obſervations upon it; which I ſhall not now repeat, but go on to add ſome others, which the time did not permit me then to lay before you.

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And the principal obſervation is this, that ſeeing God hath faſhioned the hearts of all

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individuals of the human ſpecies, alike; planting in each of them thoſe powers, faculties, and affections which are eſſential to ſuch a nature or kind; we may hence infer, that he intended the ſame great end of life, or chief good, for all of them. Theſe two, the chief end, and the chief good, are joined together, becauſe, as we will ſee afterwards, they are in nature, inſeparably connected; and it is not poſſible that a being of infinite goodneſs ſhould frame ſuch a creature as man, for an ultimate end in life different from that creature's principal happineſs; ſo as that he might purſue after, and attain to that end, and yet not attain to the higheſt happineſs he is made capable of. This cannot be the caſe; ſuch cannot be the workmanſhip of a Being whoſe original and great deſign, in the making of ſuch creatures, is the communication of perfection and bleſſedneſs.

Let us then, from the likeneſs of the human heart in all the individuals, learn that the main end of ſuch a frame, and the chief good of ſuch a creature, is the ſame in all of them. The ſameneſs of natural and moral powers, the ſameneſs of affections, the ſimilarity of the capacities for action and enjoyment, very plainly ſpeak this. As they

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are of one kind and make, the purpose they were made principally to serve, must be one and the same. SECT. V.

If we take a view of the inferior brutal orders, we see that they are conducted to all the happiness designed for them, by mere instinct. Without counsel or design, without any reflexion upon what they were made for, without any reasoning with themselves, concerning the means necessary to be used for serving that end; without any thing of this kind, I say, they are, by the mere force of appetite and instinct, conducted to all that was intended for them. And this never fails of being the case, with every individual, unless some accidental cause arrests the progress of nature in them, or renders them incapable of serving the purposes of it. It is not so in man: There are various instincts planted in human nature, as in the brutes, and of great use in life; but they have not over the heart of man such a power, a necessitating power, one may call it, as they have in the inferior animal kinds. The reason is obvious; namely, that man is a creature formed for acting from counsel and design, for directing his conduct by reason and judgment. And by these he is made capable of reflecting upon,

SERM. V. of diſcerning what he was made for, and thoſe methods in the conduct of life, which are proper for his attaining that end: So that man is to go on as a voluntary agent, acting from wiſe counſel and deſign, with an eye to the purpoſe which he is to ſerve.

But then one would think that the end which every individual was to ſerve in life, ſhould be very clear to him; ſo obvious, that no man could miſs of it, that it ſhould appear in the ſtrongeſt light, ſo that all who are capable of reflexion might perfectly diſcern, and be fully ſatisfied concerning it: and that nothing could be more amazing, than that the chief end of human life ſhould be the ſubject of diſputation; and men divided in their ſentiments concerning it: Better, ſurely, may it be ſaid, that we had been conducted, as the inferior orders, by the mere force of irreſiſtible inſtinct, than thus left to the dictates of reaſon, if that is found to be inſufficient. Now to this it is anſwered, that nature hath indeed made this matter very clear; and ſet it in the ſtrongeſt light. The powers which God hath planted in us, the power of conſcience teaches it plainly; ſo that no man who followeth conſcience, can poſſibly miſs the true end of life. Conſcience ſheweth what is good, and what is evil;

evil; what is worthy, and what is unworthy of us; conſcience checks us when we go aſtray; applauds us when we do what is right; ſets before us worth and integrity, as what we ought, at any expence, to maintain; commands us to give up all things which come into competition with them; it points out, therefore, moral perfection, as the higheſt and nobleſt thing in human life; and bids us reſt in this, and in the joy which we are ſenſible does and will attend it, as the very greateſt thing we can attain; in other words, as our chief good and chief end. There is no myſtery in all this; every man who reflects ſeriouſly, may perfectly diſcern it. SECT. V.

But when the purity and ſimplicity of nature is loſt, when the moral powers are weakened, when conſcience hath reſigned its ſupremacy, nay, perhaps, in a great meaſure loſt its feeling, which is not ſeldom the caſe; when nature is loſt to all order, and converted into a perfect ruin, by neglect and inattention, by the prevalence of vile luſts and wicked courſes of life; it is then no wonder at all, that *the light which is in men* ſhould become *darkneſs*; and that they ſhould wander and miſtake in thoſe matters which are the cleareſt and plaineſt. In truth, it is not ſubtile reaſoning

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soning we want on this head; but a right heart, and natural feelings: For, not the man of the deepest penetration, but he of the most candid and ingenuous spirit, will best know what human life was intended for; that is, the chief end of it. But as some men seem to have mistaken this point; and many who, in theory or speculation, judge right concerning it, yet go wrong in their conduct; as being without that sentiment, without that feeling, of the truth, which should determine them; since such is the case, I say, it will not be unprofitable to enter into those reasonings concerning the great end and chief good of human life, to which nature directs us; and which, of all things, the holy scriptures most inculcate; all which reasonings will conduct us to Solomon's conclusion, namely, that *to fear God, and keep his commandments, is the whole of man.*

Now to set this matter in a light as clear and affecting as I can, you will observe, that whatever is the chief good and the highest end of man, admitting the wisdom and goodness of our maker, must necessarily have the following characters; it must be what every individual, who sets himself in earnest to pursue after it, may hope to attain; it must be that

that for the ſake of which all things, the enjoyment of which prove inconſiſtent with it, are to be given up; it muſt be that, in which the mind perfectly reſts, and is ſatisfied; and finally, it muſt be ſtable and durable as the mind itſelf. Let us now inquire, what it is to which theſe characters do all agree. SECT. V.

For the firſt, that it is what every individual, who ſets himſelf in earneſt to purſue after it, may hope to attain; I ſay, who earneſtly purſueth after it; for, as hath been already obſerved, we are to attain to the chief end of life, not by the mere force of animal inſtinct, but by a voluntary application of our powers; by diſcipline, and a careful improvement of all thoſe helps and advantages, natural or extraordinary, which the Creator hath furniſhed us with. As to this firſt character, I ſay, it is plain, that the chief good and principal end of human life muſt anſwer this deſcription; becauſe, if any individuals are neceſſarily precluded from attaining to it, this cannot be the chief good of the kind: as in this reſpect, ſome men be as different from others, as the brutal kinds are from men. And, in truth, no diverſity of ſpecies can be greater, than a diverſity in the very end of being: So that if all

SERM. V. all men have not the ſame chief end, they are not the ſame kind of creatures. But if they have all the ſame end, then ſurely it is what every individual may reaſonably hope to obtain; and what no one can ſay he is abſolutely cut off from.

If this be the caſe, you ſee evidently that ſome things which many purſue with the greateſt eagerneſs, cannot be our chief good. Great riches, great authority, and power, elegance and refinement in the joys of ſenſe; theſe things ſome men, according to their different taſtes, ſet ſuch a value upon, as to think life nothing without them, and, to all appearance, would as ſoon ceaſe to be, as to live deprived of them. Now, ſurely, theſe cannot be the chief good of the ſpecies; for the greateſt part of the individuals have no opportunity of attaining to them; they are in circumſtances which cut them off from all hope. They have been, and always will be, in a ſtate low and obſcure, poor and depreſſed. And, as many never can attain them; ſo no man can be ſure, (I ſpeak now of ſuch as come into the world in a low eſtate) that by all the efforts in his power, he ſhall ever arrive at them. He may have great capacity, may uſe great induſtry and application, with

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the utmoſt perſeverance in it, and yet all can- SERM. not inſure him of ſucceſs: From which it is V. plain, the Creator did not intend him for any ſuch thing, as the end of his being: But this is ſo obvious, that it doth not need much illuſtration.

Secondly, the chief good and higheſt end of life, is that for the ſake of which all things inconſiſtent with it, are to be given up. This is the rule by which all men direct themſelves in the purſuit of that, be what it will, which their hearts are ſet upon as their principal aim. So, the covetous are diſpoſed to do any thing, to ſuffer any thing, by which their wealth may be increaſed. The man likewiſe who is a ſlave to the luſts of the fleſh, will ſacrifice all to the gratification of them. And what will not the ambitious do, what will they not ſuffer, for aggrandizing and raiſing themſelves to the higheſt ſtations? Now, this is as it ſhould be, upon the ſuppoſition that the principal aim was right: Here indeed lies the error, and ſurely a moſt fatal one. But is there no way of being ſafely directed to that which is really the higheſt end; and for the ſake of which, men are perfectly right in giving up all things inconſiſtent with it? No doubt there is, if we will but liſten to the

ſuggeſtions

ſuggeſtions of nature. That for inſtance, can never be the higheſt end which, in the cooleſt and moſt diſpaſſionate temper, and when reaſon and nature are the moſt free and unbiaſſed, a man can be indifferent about. Now, we know that men very far from being rich in this world, but having what is neceſſary, are ſeen to be perfectly ſatisfied; and have no deſires after more. We ſee them, in the moſt cool and diſpaſſionate temper, and when reaſon ſeems to have its full force in them, preferring other things. So alſo it is, with reſpect to authority and high ſtation: We ſee men who can be and are quite contented without theſe diſtinctions. Again, into what moderate bounds will hardy temperance bring the ſenſual pleaſures and joys? So that men ſhall be quite eaſy, nay happy, in abſtinence and ſelf-denial, which to others would be a moſt intolerable yoke. But let it be tried, whether the mind in a cool diſpaſſionate temper ſeriouſly reflecting, and attending to the dictates of nature, can be quite indifferent as to a moral character, to virtue, to what is worthy, and decent, and fit in life, to the joys which ſpring from doing good, from the conſcious approbation of the heart, and above all, from the approbation of our maker?

maker? Again, we ſee that what men have with the greateſt eagerneſs purſued, in ſome ſtages of life, in others, they become quite indifferent to, or perhaps conceive an averſion againſt it; ſo that what was once their idol, becometh now their abhorrence. But who ever felt in his mind ſuch a change with reſpect to moral dignity and perfection; ſo that what was once the joy of his heart, above all other things, did afterwards, to his deliberate ſerious thoughts, appear worthleſs, or a matter of indifferency? We can eaſily conceive a perſon, through the power of temptation, declining from the paths of virtue, and becoming corrupt and wicked; but, at the ſame time, it is certain that his ſerious reflecting thoughts condemn him? Nature, by an injured and accuſing conſcience, informs him that he is wrong; and he can have no ſtable peace or tranquility, till he returns to the paths he had forſaken. Never can man, from a virtuous habit and ſtate, ſuffer ſuch a change as, in a deliberate, calm and ſerious temper, to become quite indifferent to virtue and moral worth; unleſs we ſhould ſuppoſe him intirely loſt to all ſenſe of right and wrong; a thing hardly, if at all, poſſible. Farther, men are not only ſeen to become

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indifferent

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indifferent to other purſuits, nay, to hate what their hearts have been formerly ſet upon; but to be convinced of ſuch folly and irregularity in thoſe affections which before have governed them, as to ſuffer deep remorſe, in reflecting upon the part they have acted; and the expence at which they have gratified the reigning paſſion: but where is the man who hath ever felt remorſe for acting with temperance and purity, with righteouſneſs and generoſity, with compaſſion and tenderneſs, with a juſt zeal for God, and the cauſe of virtue? Or, who ever repented of the expence of ſelf-denial or ſuffering, at which he ſteadily maintained a right moral character? On the contrary, are not reflexions upon a paſt good life, the moſt joyous which can ſpring up in the heart; and ſtill more joyous, the more men have approved their integrity, in the ſevereſt trials? Would any man, in a cool deliberate hour, exchange this heart-felt joy, for any pleaſures of ſenſe, any degree of wealth, any temporal honour or power, even the higheſt? No, aſſuredly; the wealth of the Indies, all the power of a Cæſar or Alexander, could it be offered in exchange, would be rejected. Nature rejoices in this ſtate, as incomparably the moſt excellent

lent and worthy of all attainments. A wise man will give up his pleaſures, his poſſeſſions, honours, every thing, rather than forfeit his integrity; but will never ſacrifice his integrity to the purpoſes of pleaſure or gain; for he cannot do it, without being ſenſible that it is againſt nature; and without being condemned of his own heart. SERM. V.

But for a farther illuſtration of this, let us ſee how we regard the conduct of others. When we ſee one man proſtituting himſelf to an infamous vice, to gratify an outrageous paſſion; or when we ſee an eager deſire, after any ſenſual or temporal enjoyment, to overbear all honourable ſentiments and affections; ſo that truth and honour, generoſity and tenderneſs, the love of one's friend and country, duty towards God, and every thing elſe, is ſacrificed to it; or, if we ſee any man's heart ſo ſet upon any low acquiſition and enjoyment, as to be perfectly indifferent to every thing truly valuable. Let us then ſet againſt this the character of a perſon, in whom virtue, in all its forms, appears with luſtre; in temperance, chaſtity, faithfulneſs, generoſity, piety, and all other things which are lovely; when we likewiſe ſee the dignity of this character ſupported, at the expence of any ſuffering

SERM. V. fering to which men can be obnoxious; so that, with an unshaken constancy of mind, they will endure any thing rather than violate conscience, and forfeit the approbation of God; I say, when we compare those two characters, is it possible we should be indifferent towards them? Doth not the latter command veneration and esteem? Is there not a most attractive dignity in it? Doth not the heart passionately wish to possess it, as the very perfection of human nature? Again, doth not the former appear deformed and hateful, vile and contemptible? What! a character in which sentiments of truth, honour, generosity, tenderness, piety, have no place! Can the heart ever be reconciled to it?

Thus, in moral perfection, we find that which is lovely, and excellent, that which is desireable for itself and for the sake of which, all things inconsistent with the pursuit and attainment of it, are to be given up: nay, one may venture to assert, that there is in moral excellence what is dearer to an ingenuous mind, than its own existence. Let any man of ingenuity deliberately consider with himself, whether he could desire existence, perfectly void of all truth, honour, generosity,

generosity, gratitude and piety; and full of the contrary vices? Or whether he would not, from this moment, rather ceaſe to be, than to exiſt in ſuch a wretched ſtate? The heart will immediately reſolve this queſtion, and riſe with indignation and abhorrence at the thought. With reſpect to particular actions, let an honeſt man ſay, whether, ſuppoſing it were put to his choice, that he ſhould by a moſt perfidious villainy betray his country, to its utter ruin; or in the moment of refuſal ſhould ceaſe to be; let him ſay whether he would not moſt certainly chooſe annihilation, rather than be guilty of ſuch an infamous crime. Continuance of being, with ſuch guilt and infamy, he muſt ſurely regard as a curſe, as an intolerable burden. It is true, that no man can be put to ſuch a choice; becauſe men have only power to kill the body, but have no power at all over the ſoul; and we believe, upon very good reaſons, that what men loſe or ſuffer in this life, for a good conſcience, ſhall be compenſated in another world: Nor ſhall any man ſerve our gracious ſupreme Lord for nothing; or ſuffer for him, ſo as to be a final loſer. Yet, at the ſame time, it is certain, that if no future ſtate or retribution were to be expected, ſtill the caſe

Serm. would be the ſame, with an ingenuous mind.
V. Were there no hereafter, but that our very exiſtence were to end with life; yet ſuch men would give up life itſelf, rather than contract ſuch guilt, by doing what is ſo infamous and baſe; would give up life deliberately, and with a moſt perfect ſelf-approbation. We ſee then, that the human heart is ſo framed, that virtue and moral perfections are dearer to it, even than exiſtence. And the very firſt ſentiment, which is indeed the voice of ſound nature, in every caſe where virtue and other things ſtand in competition, is, that theſe ought all to be given up; that virtue is to be retained at any expence; that exiſtence without it is not worth holding; much leſs ſtill, in a contrary ſtate, of all infamy and vice.

Thus we ſee that virtue, moral perfection, and thoſe pure joys which attend it, ſpringing from an approving heart, from a ſenſe of the favour and approbation of our maker, and the hope of what he will beſtow upon his ſervants, (for all theſe things are to go together in the preſent argument) I ſay, we ſee that theſe are the higheſt attainments in our power; and for the ſake of which, all other things are to be given up. So then, this

this happy ſtate hath ſo far the character of the higheſt end, or of the chief good. SERM. V.

Thirdly, that which is the higheſt end, and chief good, muſt be that in which the mind reſts perfectly ſatisfied; as having what gives full content; and than which nothing greater can be attained. Let us try, by appealing to our own hearts, whether any thing temporal and external, comes up to this character? We have Solomon's teſtimony to the negative; he had tried all things; he was crowned with the higheſt honour; he had amazing wealth; he could exhauſt every pleaſure; he had extenſive knowledge and learning: Yet, upon the whole, he pronounces all this to be, in one or other reſpect, vanity. And moſt certainly true it is, concerning all theſe things, however dazzling their diſtant appearance, that yet in poſſeſſion, they yield far leſs than was expected. To this truth all men bear teſtimony: And though, for a time, imagination may be intoxicated, yet when ſober and cool reflexion takes place, men will at leaſt clearly diſcern, that none of theſe things yield complete bliſs. Nay, very often, great abundance of them gives moſt fatiguing labour and trouble; inſomuch that the great, oppreſſed and perplexed, have been ſeen to

SERM. V. make their retreat from them; and to court ſolitude and retirement, as a ſanctuary, where they might enjoy themſelves. Add to this, that whatever the mind fixes upon as the chief good, it cannot but conſtantly purſue after greater degrees of it. Nor is this to be looked upon as moral infirmity; but as a diſpoſition neceſſarily ariſing from our very frame; and a diſpoſition very fit for a creature capable of, and intended for, endleſs improvement and progreſs. Accordingly, where deſire fixeth upon the proper, that is, the higheſt object; its being thus inſatiable is not a fault, but an amiable excellency. However, the fact is no doubt ſo, that whatever men purſue as the chief good, they will never find themſelves fully ſatisfied with the degree already poſſeſſed; but always aſpire to a higher. Thus, the man of pleaſure, the covetous, the ambitious; pleaſure, wealth, and power, being their chief good, they are never contented with what they have in poſſeſſion. Now, as in all ſuch purſuits, moderation is neceſſary to true enjoyment; ſo men, when they exceed the bounds of moderation, ſuffer deeply by exceſs. This ſhews, that in theſe things wherein it is poſſible to exceed, the mind formed originally for going ſtill on to farther

farther degrees, cannot be perfectly satisfied. Sect. V.
And indeed there is a sense of dignity and excellency, of the worthy and honourable, necessarily accompanying any object which makes a part of our supreme good; of which sensual and temporal enjoyments are destitute; and therefore, though they may be all which some corrupted and debased minds wish; yet they can never satisfy even them; how much less, him who can think freely and according to nature! Besides, how low would that character appear to be, which could find its complete happiness, in riches, or power, or pleasure; or even in knowledge and learning, abstracted from righteousness, goodness, purity, faithfulness, piety, and the other virtues of life! Or that man, who had no taste for the joy which springs from these, for the approbation which followeth them from conscience, from the world, and from God himself! While humanity is not utterly destroyed, there will be perceived in substantial virtue and worth, something peculiarly excellent, above all things to be esteemed, and without which human happiness is altogether unattainable. This also is the source of felicity to the orders of being above us: Nay, is not eternal invariable rectitude and goodness, the

Serm. V. glory and the happiness of God himself! Therefore, in whatever consisting, his image and likeness upon the human mind, must be attended with enjoyment which is a resemblance, however faint, of his felicity, and consequently, must be of the highest and noblest kind. In this the mind doth rest perfectly satisfied; that is, in a state of moral purity and goodness; a state of universal rectitude and virtue, attended with a constant joy in the exercise of virtue, with a pleasing approbation of conscience, a sense of the favour of God, and most assured hope of all those blessings and favours from him which we are capable of, in the course of our future existence; And how great those favours are, who can tell? To be filled with all the fulness of God, is a thought which above all things satisfies our utmost wish! God himself is declared to be the portion of his servants: that inexhaustible fountain of all glory, all perfection, and happiness, is theirs, so far as they are capable of enjoying it. Here then is found a state, in which we know the mind must have such a plenitude of bliss, as will perfectly satisfy; being of the noblest kind, and in the highest degree, of which we have any idea: an happiness, in the enjoyment of which,

which, as there will be no interruption, ſo no end; nor any thing to obſtruct a progreſs in it, provided the mind itſelf is ſtill capable of improvement; which moſt probably is the caſe, through every order of created intelligence. Were this matter to be determined by the experience of good men, even in this imperfect ſtate, we ſhould undoubtedly find their minds ſometimes very much at reſt, and ſatisfied. In this ſelf-ſatisfaction, from the teſtimony of their conſcience, in hope towards God, in a ſenſe of his preſence and favour, they have moſt ſolid joy; they know moſt aſſuredly, that they want no more to complete their bliſs, than the perfection of that mortal ſtate here begun; which perfection, with its conſequences, is their utmoſt aim, the higheſt object of their deſires. This is the reſt and joy, which can never be found in the pleaſures, or the pomps of this world, nor in any thing but that one ſtate, which as it is a ſanctuary from all diſtreſſing evil, ſo it is a ſource of the nobleſt good.

Finally, the higheſt end and chief good of human nature, muſt be that which is ſtable like the mind itſelf; it cannot be what may be interrupted, or intirely cut off, by adverſity, and misfortune, by ſickneſs, or diſorder,

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or want of taste, by fulness and satiety, by different turns or stages of life, by old age, or, lastly, by death. Now, what can we name of things external and temporal, what indeed but true virtue, and the rewards of it, which is not subjected to these accidents; which, to the possessor, may render them all vanity and vexation of spirit? It is virtue, the favour of God, and that happiness which his moral government promises to the worthy, which alone is stable as the days of heaven, and as the unalterable measures of the divine administration.

So then, upon the whole, the highest end of human life, the chief good of human nature, consists in a state wherein virtue is perfected; in which the sacred and pure joys which spring from it, shall be unmixed; in which, according to the capacity of the mind, there will be an uninterrupted progressive, endless fruition, of the original infinite excellence and beauty! A state the most beautiful and honourable, the most exalted of which we can frame any idea! It is this state in which we have fellowship with the Angels of God in heaven; it is and must be their chief good, as well as ours. In this state we have communion with our Lord, Jesus Christ;

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our glorious leader, who intended to bring us to this perfection and happiness, by all he acted, by all he suffered! And finally, it is in this, that we have fellowship with the father of lights, from whom every good and perfect gift doth descend! This consummation of virtue is the ultimate end of all the powers and faculties which God hath given us; of all the privileges, and advantages, of whatever kind, he hath conferred upon us as men and christians; and of all the discipline in which we are trained up, and all the providences of God towards us.

But, O miserable perversion of mind! miserable darkness and prejudice! by which we are so much alienated from what is our only solid glory, and solid bliss! How few, compared to the multitudes of mankind, how very few, who pursue after this supreme good, as they are seen to do after other things! How eager and impatient the desires, how impetuous, and earnest, and persevering too, their endeavours after the fading glories of this world, after the mammon of unrighteousness, after sordid pleasure, and the means of attaining it! while immortal glory, durable riches, and purest pleasures, are either quite neglected, or followed after with such

coldness

Sermon. V. coldness of desire, such indolence, as shew they are, by no means, our highest aim, or felt as our chief good! What then is this owing to? not surely to want of knowledge; not to deficiency of argument to evince what is really our chief good; but to want of taste, want of the internal moral feelings; which how they are to be attained, I shall endeavour to shew, in laying before you some other observations upon this great argument, which shall be the subject of a distinct discourse.

In the mean time, let us attend to it, that He who framed our hearts alike, and gave us the same essential, especially, moral powers; intends us for the same ultimate end, and the same supreme good. It ought to be carefully attended to, that high and low, rich and poor, noble and ignoble, prosperous or afflicted, make no difference here. He *who made of one blood all nations to dwell upon the face of the earth*, hath made all men for the same general purpose. Agreeably to this speaketh the Gospel; *In Jesus Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, Barbarian nor Scythian, bond or free, servant or master, male or female, but all are one in Christ Jesus.* A most comfortable and pleasing declaration! Distinctions of this kind, in the present state of things,

things, there always have been, and always must be: But, with respect to the main ends of life, and the supreme good, no such distinctions are admitted. How much ought this to reconcile us to the constitution and administration we are under? The poor, the unfortunate, the unhealthful, must feel; and it is no wonder they are disposed to complain; and the rather, that a low and unfortunate estate is very apt to be despised, be their personal merit in that state, what it will. Men are very apt, in this respect as well as many others, to judge after the outward appearance; and so to regulate their esteem. But, notwithstanding this unrighteous measure, how substantial the inward consolation, from a sense, that, in the lowest possible circumstances, we are capable of serving and attaining to the true ends of life! This will be a most glorious distinction, when all others are lost for ever! To this an ingenuous mind has recourse as the best refuge and solace in all misfortunes; and having also the testimony of a good conscience, can bear them with a most magnanimous patience. Put the case that they who are poor and despised, and unfortunate, in this life, should be in like condition, with respect to the highest

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higheſt purpoſes of being; how melancholy muſt their ſtate appear? and how unkind the ſupreme ruler? But on the contrary, ſo he hath provided, that we ſhall not miſs of the greateſt good which human nature is capable of, but by our own default. And this is ſo clear, from our very frame, and from frequent declarations in the holy ſcriptures, that there cannot be the leaſt doubt of it. How gracious then our maker, the glorious parent and head of the numberleſs intellectual family? And how ought we to rejoice in being members of it! What are all temporal diſtinctions put together, when compared with true worth and the hope of heaven! How ſoon will all thoſe outward diſtinctions be loſt! Our fathers where are they? Where, the generations before us, in all theſe reſpects, which are of a temporal kind? Where is now the pomp and glory of once the greateſt monarchs upon earth? All gone and loſt for ever! The only diſtinction which remaineth, is true worth; which is an everlaſting crown, and the moſt glorious poſſible, &c.

SERMON

SERMON VI.

The means by which the higheſt end and ſupreme good of human nature may be attained.

PSALM xxxiii. and 15.

He faſhioneth their hearts alike:——

WE have ſeen, in two former diſcourſes upon theſe words, the general likeneſs of the individuals of the human kind, in all thoſe powers and faculties which are eſſential to the ſpecies; and at the ſame time, the conſiſtency of that likeneſs with a moſt ſurpriſing diverſity amongſt theſe individuals, with reſpect to things not eſſential; a diverſity, which ſerveth very valuable purpoſes to human ſociety; and is, in itſelf, beautiful, and pleaſing to the contemplative mind. Some practical obſervations on this ſubject have alſo been pointed out; the principal of which is this, that, as men are formed alike in thoſe powers and principles which

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Serm. VI. which are essential to human nature; so the great end of life, the great purpose for which the Creator formed such a kind, must be the same in all. It was shewed you what this end is, namely, moral perfection, and the happiness which resulteth from it, to ourselves and others; it was also very particularly explained how nature and reason direct us to fix upon this, as our highest end and supreme good; from the very frame of the heart, and the internal sensations of which every man who attendeth must be conscious; and it was observed that the same important truth is most clearly set forth in the holy scriptures, and above all other things inculcated. Now, all this naturally leads us to consider, by what means, and methods, this highest end and supreme good of human nature is to be obtained.

And here in the first place, we cannot but observe a wide difference between mankind and all the other works of God, in this World. To pass over all that kind of life, so called, which is found in the various orders of vegetables; which is a thing quite distinct from the power of action and spontaneous motion, and which is wholly the efficacious energy of that power which maketh and governeth all; I say, to omit all this, we see in the brutal orders

orders of every kind, that the individuals are conducted to all the perfection, to the highest ends designed for them, by the mere force of inſtinct, and without counſel or deſign in them; ſo that, if the courſe of nature is not accidentally interrupted, they never fail of attaining to its chief end. Quite otherwiſe is it with mankind; who were made for acting from principle and counſel; capable of propoſing ends to themſelves, and of chooſing the means by which thoſe ends are moſt effectually ſerved: who have alſo the powers of conſcience and moral diſcernment planted in them; thus ſeeing what is right and what is wrong, they are capable of either, and are plainly intended, by the author of nature, to be the ſubject of ſelf-government and diſcipline. The conſequence of ſuch a frame is plainly this, that though no man can ſay it is impoſſible for him to attain the higheſt end, and ſupreme good of life; yet he knoweth that it is, on the other hand, very poſſible for him, by voluntary default, to miſs of it; and in fact we ſee that many do miſs of it, and purſue ſuch a courſe of life as quite miſleads them. SECT. VI.

At the ſame time, it is certain, that, as the higheſt end and ſupreme good of life, is the ſame to all: ſo the way to it, or the method

thod of obtaining it, must be the same in all. Not that all have the same means and advantages given them, for we see it is quite otherwise in fact; some men have a much greater measure of natural abilities, than others; some again are favoured with a divine revelation, above others; and this is one of the greatest advantages in the present state of things which can be imagined. The meaning therefore is, that all must attain to the chief good and highest end by the same general methods of self-government, and internal discipline, as that which is indispensibly required from all men.

And though, in the great diversity found amongst mankind, with respect to degrees of understanding and knowledge, of sagacity and foresight, some may be found, who, in the way of reasoning and speculation, can say but little concerning the relations and connexions of things, as affecting the true end of life, and the proper and certain means of attaining it; not perhaps having any clear ideas of such matters; yet these very persons, by following nature, and submitting their conduct to conscience and to the laws of God, shall take the very same method in conducting life, to which the clearest reason, and the most comprehensive view of things, direct others.

others. Certainly this ſhews what a kind provision God hath made for us, in our very conſtitution; though we cannot perhaps penetrate deeply, or reaſon acutely, yet we ſhall be perfectly ſafe in following that ſenſe of right, which, in unprejudiced minds, is the plaineſt of all things. This therefore is the great thing, that whatever various degrees of knowledge men may have, with reſpect to the relations and connexions of things, or with reſpect to ends and means; yet the methods in life, thoſe of diſcipline and ſelf-government, by which the ends of it are obtained, muſt be the ſame in all. Some men, it is true, from the advantages of a natural complexion, from ſweetneſs of temper, and calmneſs of paſſion, need diſcipline much leſs than others; or may be ſo favoured by divine communications, which we are aſſured, hath been ſometimes the caſe, as to be raiſed much above the common rate of mortals, and the common neceſſity of diſcpline; yet ſtill it is in ſome meaſure neceſſary to all, and muſt be of the ſame kind in all. SECT. VI.

It will now, it is hoped, not be an unpleaſing or unprofitable entertainment to our thoughts, to take the view we propoſed of that diſcipline and government by which we attain our higheſt perfection; and of the progreſs men natu-

SERM. VI. rally, by means of it, make towards that perfection.

Should a perſon always purſue the tendency of that paſſion or deſire, which happens to be at preſent uppermoſt, without any conſideration whether it be right or wrong, or the courſe of action on which it puts him, good or evil, profitable or otherwiſe; ſuch perſon, ſurely, would be an utter ſtranger to all diſcipline, indeed could hardly be called a rational agent; for where men are directed and prompted by deſire only, thus far, how are they better, or how in a higher rank, than the beaſts of the field? But we find a power given us by our maker of reſiſting paſſion, of ſuſpending the action to which deſire prompteth us; we have a power of conſidering, and a ſtandard whereby to judge, whether any thing be right or wrong, whether expedient or inexpedient: Nay, we are ſo made, that it is not poſſible to preſerve any peace and harmony in the mind, if certain paſſions are not reſtrained; if thoſe which are of an inferior kind, are not ſubordinated and ſubjected, to ſuch as are of an higher nature, and more important. Thus it is we become the ſubjects of diſcipline, and are capable of acting from counſel, from principle and a ſenſe of right; to ſay it in a word, become capable of acting as men.

We

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We therefore here find the first beginning of what is virtuous and praise-worthy; when we do not follow the solicitations of passion or desire, universally, or do not follow them the full length at which they aim; but, before we proceed to action, call them to an account, in order to judge whether the present tendency of them is agreeable to reason, and conscience; and if it should not be found so then absolutely refusing to comply: laying this down as a maxim in conduct, that no passion or desire, however importunate, shall be gratified, if reason and conscience condemn it; upon this principle, resisting inclination in its greatest height, with inflexible resolution and steadiness. Upon which occasions of preferring what is right and fit, to what is at present desirable, and so of denying ourselves, when we have acted our part aright; we shall have a most pleasing sense of honour, in the victory obtained over ourselves, and of having pleased our maker; whose intention and will it is, that we should prefer what is right, to all other considerations. But I need not enlarge on this, every man of real worth must be instructed in it, by his own experience.

In the same manner, when the mind feels a present reluctance against what we ought to do; and what our hearts must necessarily condemn us for neglecting; here likewise, virtue

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is proved, and the ſtrength of our ſenſe of what is right and honourable. Againſt ſuch reluctance we are to ſtrive with all our might; and immediately ſet about doing our duty, in ſpight of ourſelves, that is, of the preſent reluctance we feel. Thus making it our immoveable reſolution in acting, or not acting, to approve ourſelves to our own reflecting thoughts, to our conſciences, however preſent inclination may be contradicted: For in ſuch caſes, paſſion and inclination were made to be controled; conſcience and the ſenſe of right, to have the dominion in our conduct.

But to proceed, the mind is ſo formed, that not only there is a power in it to ſuſpend preſent action, to call paſſion and deſire to account, and to reſiſt them when irregular; but the very ſtrength, or weakneſs, of the particular paſſions doth, in a great meaſure, depend upon the due management of them. Who doth not know, who hath not obſerved, that the humours and paſſions of a child, by daily indulgence grow ſtronger and more ungovernable; and that by diſcipline and reſtraint, they become more modeſt, and governable? Juſt ſo it is through the whole of life; an habitual unreſtrained indulgence of a paſſion, gives it a power which ſcarce admits control; whereas, frequent exerciſe of ſelf-denial, and refuſing to gratify it, weakens the

the very paſſion itſelf, and brings it into or- SERM. VI
der. So that the more men uſe themſelves to deny the ſolicitations of vehement deſire, the more eaſy do they find it, to deny them; and a paſſion, which at firſt perhaps could not be reſiſted without the greateſt pain and difficulty, becomes by degrees tame and ſubmiſſive. However, this ſelf-denial takes place, principally, in the paſſions of an inferior nature; as without ſuch reſtraint, an honourable and worthy character can never be obtained. Generally ſpeaking, the higher and more honourable deſires, ſuch as of knowledge and wiſdom, but eſpecially of moral perfection and thoſe things which are above, are too weak and languid; in which caſe it is our duty, and the buſineſs of virtue, ſtrengthen and confirm them, in theſe two ways; firſt, by labouring to ſuppreſs the deſires which are of an oppoſite nature and to tendency; which are groſs and earthly, depreſſing, as a dead weight, the nobler affections of the ſoul. And ſecondly, by preſenting the excellent objects of the worthieſt deſires, very frequently to the mind; by ſetting them in the faireſt and moſt amiable light; removing, ſo far as we can, all prejudices againſt them, all falſe aſſociations of ideas concerning them. Thus theſe deſires will ſhoot up with vigour; and the mind, ſet free from pre-

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judice and wrong bias, will be prepared, with cordial affection, to embrace the glorious object. In this manner as experience ſhews, we may greatly influence our deſires and averſions with regard to our fellow-creatures, and other objects; ſuch as even the manner of doing things, the mien, geſture and the like; ſo that what we have formerly unjuſtly admired, ſhall become our averſion; and what we have unreaſonably diſliked, ſhall become lovely and pleaſing. Wonderful is the effect which frequent ſerious communing with our own hearts will have, in theſe reſpects; and that ſame diſcipline, and labour with ourſelves, will not be in vain, in matters of the higheſt importance.

But then, it is ſuppoſed that a perſon who entereth into ſuch a diſcipline, with a full purpoſe to anſwer the ends of it, will be conſtantly attentive to his own temper and conduct; that he will not only think, and deliberate ſeriouſly, before be acteth in any matter of importance, but that he will give room to conſcience, the divine vicegerent in his boſom, to call his paſt actions, from time to time, to account; that he will with impartiality liſten to its ſuggeſtions, be pleaſed with its commendation when he hath done right, more than with the applauſes of all the world; and receiving meekly its rebukes, when,

when, in any inſtance, he knoweth he hath done wrong. Upon which occaſion, there ought to be a particular repentance for the fault; care ſhould be taken to ſet it before the mind in all the aggravations of it, and to give way to ingenuous remorſe, however painful, that ſo, a deep regret for what hath been done amiſs, may beget caution for the future, with an utter abhorrence of what is evil, and a ſtrong reſolution of doing ſo no more. That is that repentance of *a godly ſort, which needeth not to be repented of*; which is the natural means of attaining to reformation of life; and without which indeed, little progreſs in virtue is to be expected. SERM. VI.

Farther, when men perſevering in ſuch diſcipline, and ſupported by a divine aid, (of which afterwards) when men, I ſay, perſevering in ſuch diſcipline, have gone on, avoiding evil with care, and doing their duty to the beſt of their power; they will by degrees, contract habits which are good, and which give great ſtrength to the worthy affections, and to conſcience. Every one knows the power of habit: it is, in truth, very great, and juſtly termed a ſecond nature; it will make things, at firſt very diſagreeable, not only ceaſe to be ſo, but render them delightful; it will ſo engage the mind, that men cannot be eaſy out of the accuſtomed traces

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traces of thought and action; nay, it is ſeen ſo to prevail, that men ſhall, inſenſibly to themſelves, do thoſe things to which they have been much and long accuſtomed: And we ſee it takes place, in almoſt all things, and in all perſons. Now, there are moral habits as well as others; and one would think that where they are on the ſide of pure genuine nature, as undoubtedly they are on the practice of virtue, there they ſhould be the ſtrongeſt, and have the greateſt influence. Good men muſt know this from experience; and thus by the mere power of habit, that of conſcience is greatly ſtrengthened; the bad and corrupt principles loſe their force, and are more eaſily ſuppreſſed.

Let us now ſuppoſe a perſon to go on thus, with the diſcipline of the heart, under the direction of conſcience, more and more daily confirmed by good habits, proceeding, with great and conſtant care, to correct what is amiſs, and, with that view, calling himſelf frequently to account, and exerciſing ſincere repentance for every inſtance in which he hath offended; ſuppoſe all this, I ſay, and you ſee the tendency of ſuch a courſe, to a fixed love of virtue and delight in it; to a regular exerciſe of the good affections, to the utter ſuppreſſion of bad ones; to a ſtable conformity of heart and life to the will of God; and to a reliſh for the pleaſures which

are

are pure and ſpiritual, above all others: in a word, the tendency of it is to that moral perfection, of which every man hath an idea, and at which he ought to aim, as the perfection of his nature, and inſeparably connected with his ſupreme good. SERM. VI.

Thus I have given you a ſhort view of that diſcipline, and ſelf-government, by which we may hope to attain to our higheſt end. Now a diſcourſe upon this cannot be better concluded, than by ſetting before you the encouragement we have heartily to engage and perſevere in ſuch diſcipline. And here it is to be conſidered, in the firſt place, that this diſcipline is in common neceſſary to the children of men; it is the ſole way by which we may attain to our ſupreme good. Some men will find it more painful and arduous than others, owing to a more unfortunate caſt of natural complexion, to a more than common ſtrength of the inferior paſſions, or to vicious habits unhappily contracted. But, though men of better natural tempers, and who have in a great meaſure eſcaped the ſnares of vice, may find this diſcipline eaſier, yet ſtill it is, in ſome meaſure, neceſſary to all: It is, in a word, evidently appointed for the human race; which ought to reconcile and encourage us to it. The pains of ſelf-government are not peculiar to us. The ſame

neceſſity

neceſſity is laid, and the ſame labours appointed for all. There is but one way in which all muſt walk, who mean to attain to the ſupreme good, and the higheſt end of life. The thouſands and ten thouſands, now in poſſeſſion of it, have all entered by the *ſtrait gate*, and the *narrow way*. They have happily ſucceeded; and why may not we, having the ſame advantages, the ſame aſſiſtances, the very ſame proſpects; having no worſe enemies, nor more formidable difficulties before us, than they have overcome? *Wherefore, ſeeing we are encompaſſed by ſo great a cloud of witneſſes, let us lay aſide every weight, and the ſin which ſo eaſily beſets us, and run with patience the race ſet before us, looking unto Jeſus the author and finiſher of our faith; who for the joy ſet before him, endured the croſs, and deſpiſed the ſhame.* Who was himſelf in a ſtate of diſcipline; for we are expreſſly taught, that he learned obedience by the things which he ſuffered. Let us remember, that in the moment we are complaining of the dangers around us, or of the pain we ſuffer from irregular paſſions, and the various temptations with which human life is beſet; in that ſame moment, are thouſands in the ſame condition. They have, if men of worth, the ſame conflicts in kind, with their own ſpirits;

ſpirits; the ſame labours of diſcipline, the ſame pains in watching over, and guarding themſelves. The ſtate then in which we are, is common to all the children of God, and votaries of virtue; and are we to take it ill, that we are not, by a miracle, exempted from the common lot? In ſhort, that we find ourſelves but men? And that, with reſpect to the ſupreme good of life, we are put upon a level with the reſt of the ſpecies? SERM. VI.

Let it be conſidered, in the ſecond place, that the warfare of virtue is the moſt honourable of which we can frame any idea. He is a greater, a more honourable conquetor who overcometh himſelf, than he who conquereth a city. Many men have made a conqueſt of the one who were unable to ſubdue their own paſſions. Let us appeal to the experience and feeling of all who have tried it, do they ever appear to themſelves in ſuch dignity, as when, by the power of principle, and conſcience, they have reſtrained vehement deſire and inflamed paſſion, thus maintaining their integrity in the time of greateſt trial? Do they ever appear to themſelves ſo mean and diſhonourable, as when they have given way to them? How pure the joy a man taſtes in having acted a worthy and honourable part! How great the pain and ſhame, which attend a conſciouſneſs

SERM. VI. ousness of having acted otherwise! Then indeed the crown, the most illustrious glory, falleth from the head, when men have sinned; for no glory is like that of tried and approved integrity. This is the sight which is pleasing to all judges of worth; and which should command veneration and esteem, in every circumstance: This raises that honour for a character in the heart, which is more desireable than all the vain and empty homage paid to external appearance, very consistent with inward contempt. This it is which makes us reputable in the eye of those superior beings who, though invisible, yet as the scriptures teach, are conversant amongst us. We come by true worth, and aspiring after perfection, to be of their kindred, by the bond of one spirit. Above all, this it is which maketh us pleasing in the divine eye, and the objects of his delight. To him, the true votaries of virtue, and who urge their way by religious discipline to the perfection of their natures, *are the excellent of the earth*; they shall be his, *in the day when he maketh up his jewels; their names are written in heaven.* Do but consider, what a sense of honour merely is capable of effecting in men of generous spirits; how, for their friends, their relatives, their country, it will engage them in the hardest labours, in the greatest dangers; nay prepare them

them to devote themſelves, to give up life itſelf, with a ſteady and moſt chearful reſolution. And ſhall not a ſenſe of the higheſt honour which can poſſibly crown human nature, animate us in the ſame manner! Shall the glory of being celebrated in the annals of this world, have a more powerful effect, than a ſenſe of being great in the records of heaven! Do but think, in fine, what human nature is, when ſtripped of all virtue, and polluted with all vice; how deformed, how baſe, nay, what a nuiſance it appears in the works of God! And ſurely, proportionable to this muſt be the glory of ſhining in the robes of innocence and purity, in all the rich ornaments of true virtue! No ſtate is ſo contemptible and vile as the former; no ſtate ſo reputable and glorious as the latter. What would not an ingenuous mind give for it, if it might be purchaſed by any temporal poſſeſſions? And he that hath it in poſſeſſion, would he give it in exchange for all this world contains? This ſtate bears indeed, the image of the divinity; and therefore muſt be the moſt ſhining glory of our frame. It is conſequently of the utmoſt importance that a taſte for this ſhould be cultivated: and that we ſhould frequently think of the high dignity which crowns a virtuous temper and good life; of the pure joy which ſprings from it; that a ſenſe

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a ſenſe of this ever preſent to the mind, may ſtrengthen its good purpoſes, and reconcile it to any labour and ſuffering which are found in our moral diſcipline.

Thirdly, it is a very great encouragement to engage in the practice of virtue and true religion, that we ſhall have the divine countenance and aſſiſtance; nature itſelf teaches us to rely upon this; and the ſcriptures encourage us, by many great and precious promiſes. God *will give his Holy Spirit to them who aſk him*; *He will ſtrengthen them by his might in the inner man*; *His grace ſhall be ſufficient for them*; *and he will never leave nor forſake them*. The reaſonableneſs of depending on divine aid, in the arduous duties, and difficulties of life; and that we ſhall, in the practice of virtue, have his aſſiſtance, is a thing which the wiſeſt among the ancients have taught. Nay, one of the greateſt and moſt knowing of them lays it down as a maxim, admitting of no debate, that without a divine afflatus, or inſpiration, no man was ever truly great. And indeed, when we conſider our abſolute dependance upon the ſupreme mind, for the preſervation of our powers and faculties, and for the daily exerciſe of them, it will appear extremely abſurd, to exclude that original power from any acceſs to the human mind; to imagine

that

that our Creator cannot aſſiſt us, in the exer- SERM. ciſe of the powers and faculties he hath given VI. us. Our bodies, our ſouls, have their very ſubſiſtence in his power; and yet he can give us no immediate aſſiſtance, in the ſervices he calleth us to perform! this, one would think, cannot be believed. But if indeed, God will be with us, and aſſiſt us, we cannot then fail of ſucceſs in our endeavours to ſerve the true ends of life; and to attain the ſupreme good of it: This is glorious encouragement. Who would decline to engage, when he knows that he hath God and right nature on his ſide?

Let it be added, that the higher we advance towards moral perfection, ſtill the eaſier ſhall we find the road. Whatever difficulties there may be in the practice of virtue, they are always greateſt at the firſt ſetting out; eſpecially where corrupt affections have grown ſtrong by habitual indulgence. But what are theſe difficulties owing to? not certainly to any thing unnatural in virtue or religion; not to any thing in its nature, laborious and painful; on the contrary, it will always prove true, that *the ways of wiſdom are pleaſantneſs, and all her paths peace*; that *the commandments of God are not grievous*. And in fact we ſee that there are unſpeakably greater labours, and ſufferings, in the paths of vice and folly, than in thoſe of ſtrict virtue; as the ruined

conſtitutions,

Serm. VI. constitutions, characters, and fortunes, of thousands, do abundantly demonstrate. But in reality, those difficulties are almost all owing to a depraved and corrupted taste, to bad inclinations; and we very well know these may be rectified: We see that in a thousand instances, they have been set to rights; and when this is once the case, all will be smooth and easy in a great measure, some extraordinary trials of life excepted. Are we not certain that a really good man would find the utmost reluctance in doing a criminal and base action? nay that there are some actions which one may say a person of a purified spirit could not possibly do? actions, in which, perhaps, for some time of his life he had pleasure? and what should this be owing to, but a higher sense of virtue than he had before? to what but a new and finer taste? When this is once attained, the difficulties of a truly religious life will, in a great measure, vanish; and the most chaste, and unmixed pleasures, will succeed them. This is certainly the case; and known from experience, so to be.

Lastly, there is in virtuous discipline, in keeping of the commands of God, a great and sure reward; a great reward even in this world, a much greater in the world to come. Here one might go through all the particular virtues, such as temperance, and sobriety, goodwill,

goodwill, meekneſs, humility and content- SERM.
ment, &c. and ſhew that all of them tend VI.
to the health of the animal frame, to the peace and tranquility of the mind, to the pleaſure and happineſs of ſocial life; the very ſame may likewiſe be affirmed of piety to God, of the love of him as manifeſted in religious ſervices, and as a principle of univerſal obedience. Nothing ſo much tends to raiſe and elevate the mind, nothing ſo much to enlarge and invigorate the heart. But who doth not know all this? Who doth not confeſs it? The great thing is to attend to it; to plant it deep in the heart, as the root and principle of virtuous action.

But if the reward of virtue is great, even in this life, how much greater will it be, in the world to come! Where he who *hath faſhioned our hearts alike*, and who *conſidereth all our ways*, will make the final diſtinction between his faithful ſervants, and the obſtinately diſobedient; appointing unto the former, eternal life, in the moſt perfect and happy ſtate! The ſeeds and principles of which life are planted in this world, in that holineſs and moral perfection, which is the neceſſary preparation for it. But I haſten through theſe obvious things, and will conclude this diſcourſe with one obſervation upon the di-

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verſity of genius, temper, and talents which is found among mankind; and which was particularly treated of at our entrance upon this ſubject.

Although God *hath faſhioned our hearts alike*, ſo that every individual naturally hath all thoſe powers, and faculties, and affections which are eſſential to the ſpecies; yet in men's tempers, and abilities, there is apparent a great diverſity. This, as was ſhewed, hath a beauty in it, and is highly uſeful in ſocial life; to the well-being of which, very different ſervices and offices are required; as, to thoſe ſervices, very different talents are neceſſary. Different, for inſtance, are the talents requiſite for counſel, from thoſe required for happy execution: Different again, that ſtrength of mind and courage, neceſſary for ſome ſervices, from the tenderneſs and delicacy of affection which fit men for others. So alſo the various endowments of the mind, fit men for the finer offices; ſtrength and agility of body, for the more laborious. Now, nothing can be more happy for the individuals, nothing more profitable for ſociety, than that each member ſhould be applied to thoſe ſervices for which nature hath moſt fitted him; and that he ſhould apply himſelf to cultivate thoſe powers, by which he is naturally diſtinguiſhed. If men are ſo happy as to be put into, or to chooſe

choose for themselves, this course, hardly can they miscarry, or not prove eminently useful; provided they apply themselves to their proper business, with diligence. On the contrary, it is seen, when men go, or are thrown out of that course to which nature directs them, they rarely have much enjoyment themselves, or are of eminent service to the public. A very few there are, perhaps, so eminently endowed in all respects, that it would be hard to point out to them a business in life, in which they would not succeed; still, of far the greater part it will be found, that different men are fitted for different services or offices; and that eminent success chiefly depends on the proper application of their various powers. A person may be well fitted for the contemplative life, who is no way qualified for the active: one may be fit for execution, who is but ill qualified for counsel. The fire and vigour of youth are suited for some services; the gravity, experience, and coolness of age, for others. Now, all this we may apply also to matters of morality and religion; and may avail ourselves of the observation, to find out in what manner of application we may be most eminent in virtue. There is certainly a natural cast of temper, and qualities, which ought to be attended to in our religious discipline; and we ought to

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take thoſe methods which are moſt likely to raiſe us to eminence in it. The love of God, and of mankind, which are the great vitals of religion, though the ſame in all; yet ſtill particular men, by the natural diverſity of temper and talents, are formed for eminence in ſome particular virtues, more than others. Some have originally a great tenderneſs of ſpirit, delicacy of affection, and benevolence of heart; now when true religion is grafted upon ſuch a temper, it cannot fail of being eminently fruitful in works of charity; and wiſdom will direct men to fall in with, and improve the natural turn, as the ſhorteſt and ſafeſt road to attain the higheſt perfection in thoſe particular virtues, to which it points. Again, if there is an active turn of ſpirit, attended with hardy reſolution, and patience of labour, and of ſuffering; let this be hallowed by good principles, and the ſpirit of chriſtianity; it will make a moſt manly and heroic appearance in the day of trial, or when arduous labours are to be engaged in. And as this is the proper province for ſuch perſons to be diſtinguiſhed in; ſo on ſuch occaſions, they have a peculiar call to exert their talents, by engaging in ſuch difficult ſervices, as others are leſs qualified for. So likewiſe, the turn to contemplation hath its proper province in matters of religion, as well as in common life:

life: Here, by parity of reaſon, men are like to become moſt eminent in virtue, and moſt uſeful members of the body of Chriſt, by cultivating chiefly that particular turn of genius which is natural to them. Indeed, a finiſhed moral character cannot be eſſentially defective in any reſpect; and an integrity, or intireneſs of character, is declared neceſſary to our acceptance with God; ſtill however, and conſiſtently with this, there may be a much higher eminence in ſome particular virtues, than in others; as undoubtedly, the way to that eminence is to cheriſh nature in its particular tendencies; which at the ſame time, will tend to help us on in other reſpects; as, in nature, there is a connexion among the virtues which conſtitute a good character; ſo that our excelling in one inſtance, contributes neceſſarily to our progreſs in others, *&c.* SERM. VI.

SERMON VII.

What is imported in glorifying God, and in what ſenſe the glory of God is to be the end of our actions.

1 CORINTH. X. 31.

Whether therefore you eat or drink, or whatſoever you do, do all to the glory of God.

SERM. VII. THERE is nothing in which men need clearer ideas than in matters of religion; nor any thing in which the underſtandings of men have been more confounded, for want of preciſion. And this confuſion has not only had an unhappy influence in perplexing the mind, and in embaraſſing its ſearches after truth; but has alſo, in many inſtances, greatly hurt men with reſpect to the conduct of life; and led them into practices, under the notion of religion, which have been very abſurd and pernicious. Nothing is more evident than that we can have no knowledge, where

where we have no ideas; as alſo, that we cannot have certainty, where we have not clear ideas. Accordingly, as no man will pretend to know, where he has no ideas, ſo it would be very happy for the world, if no man would profeſs to believe, or imagined he did believe, where he neither has, nor can have any. It muſt be, therefore, of great ſervice to religion, ſo far as the practice of it is concerned, to think clearly, and to give diligence to acquire diſtinct apprehenſions, in matters in which we may attain to them. And as to that ſort of phraſeology which is often uſed without any meaning, and wherein we really perhaps can have none, we need be in no pain about it; for, ſurely, it cannot hurt us to lay it aſide.

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I ſhall endeavour, in this diſcourſe, to explain what is properly meant by glorifying God; a point in which, poſſibly, many may be at a loſs. For though this expreſſion, when underſtood in a right ſenſe, tends to ſuggeſt ſome of the moſt generous and worthy ſentiments, that can poſſeſs the heart; yet we do not unfrequently meet with inſtances, in which men ſeem to have very crude and undigeſted, indeed, very abſurd notions concerning it.

The Apoſtle, in the text, directs us *whether we eat or drink, or whatſoever we do, to do all to the glory of God.* He inſtructs us

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that this ought to be our conſtant aim, the end of all our actions: And alſo that, with a view to this, we ſhould deny ourſelves the liberty of doing things which, though they are lawful and innocent, may, in certain circumſtances be inexpedient, particularly, as they may be an offence to our neighbours; that is, as our example, while we do things we are convinced are lawful, may be a temptation to him to do the ſame things, though he thinks them unlawful; or, at leaſt, has a doubt concerning them in his mind. This argument the Apoſtle largely treats of in this context: And we ſee the precept in my text, is the concluſion of the whole; *wherefore, whatſoever you do, whether you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God; giving none offence, neither to the Jew or Gentile, or to the Church of God.*

Firſt then I ſhall endeavour, in this diſcourſe, to ſhew what we are to underſtand by our glorifying God, or doing all things to his glory.

Secondly, ſhall conſider, in what ſenſe the glory of God is to be the end of our actions.

Firſt, what are we to underſtand by glorifying God? a phraſe which occurs very often in the holy ſcriptures, and it will much aſſiſt our inquiries into the true meaning of it, to conſider the various ſubjects, characters, and actions, to which it is applied. But

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But before we enter upon this, it may, by way of introduction, be obſerved, that ſurely no man can imagine, that we can, by any action of our's, render the ſupreme Being more glorious or more happy, than he neceſſarily and eternally is: He cannot be more perfect, he cannot be more bleſſed.

Conſequently, in the ſecond place, the glory of God, with reſpect to his works, and as it may be affected by intellectual and moral agents, cannot conſiſt in his receiving from them, but in communicating to them. It is this only that is worthy of God, and which is indeed his glory. From him all creatures have derived being, with whatſoever powers and faculties they poſſeſs, and whatever happineſs they enjoy: Theſe things admit of no diſpute.

Thirdly, we cannot but acknowledge that this phraſe of glorifying God, includes in it ſomething that is our duty to him, as the moſt excellent and glorious of all beings; to whom we are indebted for all that we enjoy now, or hope hereafter. Our declaring God's glory, as it is often expreſſed by divines, conſiſts in celebrating it in our praiſes, and ſhewing our ſenſe of it in our lives; of which I ſhall have opportunity to diſcourſe more particularly afterwards. But then, it would be very unworthy of God, to imagine that our ſenſe

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of his high perfections, and glory, and the praiſes we aſcribe to him, are to him of any real importance; or that this ſhould be enjoined in the ſtrongeſt terms, by divine authority, as the end of all our actions; as if God had delight merely in being celebrated by us. To delight in applauſe, only for the ſake of applauſe, is infinitely too low for divinity. And, alas! how little of God comparatively, do we underſtand? How little of his glory do we ſee? Incomprehenſible by the very higheſt orders of created being, how ſmall a portion of it can mortals comprehend? How inſignificant to him their worſhip and praiſes? ſurely, as their neglect of God can do him no injury; ſo he is not in any wiſe, dependent upon their homage.

But yet, in the laſt place, it muſt be utterly unnatural for creatures endowed with underſtanding, made capable of ſeeing *the inviſible things of God from the creation of the world*, of diſcovering *his eternal power and Godhead*, and thoſe high perfections that are every where diſplayed in his works; it would be utterly unnatural for them, I ſay, to neglect this moſt glorious Being, the God of the whole world, the parent of their ſpirits, and of all good, their conſtant benefactor, the ſtandard of all moral perfection, and therefore to all moral agents, the perfect pattern of their imitation.

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imitation. It is not poſſible that men ſhould ſeriouſly contemplate his glory, but that admiration, love, gratitude, and a ſenſe of obligation to imitate, ſhould ſpring up in their hearts; which affections are fitly expreſſed in worſhip, praiſe, and obedience.

But now, to proceed to what is principally intended, I ſhall lay before you ſuch paſſages of ſcripture, as may give us a full view of the uſe of this phraſe, glorifying God, as applied in a variety of particulars; and then, make ſome obſervations upon the true ſenſe and meaning of it.

And firſt, God is ſaid to be glorified, where he himſelf, in his works, diſplays his ſovereign power, or other perfections. Thus he ſays, concerning Pharaoh, *Exod.* ix. 16; *And in very deed, for this cauſe have I raiſed thee up, for to ſhew in thee my power, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.* In like manner we read xiv. ch. v. 4. of his getting to himſelf honour upon Pharaoh, and his hoſt, when they ſhould be overthrown in the red ſea. The meaning of this is plainly, that his ſovereign authority and irreſiſtible might ſhould be made known. So alſo in the caſe of Nadab and Abihu, the ſons of Aaron, when God had animadverted upon their impious raſhneſs in the moſt awful manner, he ſays *Lev.* x. 3. *I will be ſanctified*

SERM. VII. *ſanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people will I be glorified.* In the ſame ſenſe God is glorified, by the manifeſtation of his wiſdom and goodneſs. Thus in the xlivth of Iſaiah, verſe 23d, *Sing, O ye heavens! for the Lord hath done it; ſhout, ye lower parts of the earth! break forth into ſinging ye mountains! O foreſt and every tree therein! for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob and glorified himſelf in Iſrael!* And vi. and 3. *And one cried unto another ſaying, holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hoſts, the whole earth is full of his glory.* And we are taught in the xixth Pſalm, that the heavens declare the glory of God. From theſe, and almoſt innumerable other paſſages which might be mentioned, it appears, that God is ſaid to glorify himſelf, and to be glorified in his works, when the high perfections of his nature are manifeſted in them.

Agreeably to this way of ſpeaking, his intelligent creatures are ſaid to glorify him when they do what manifeſts their ſenſe of his perfections, and when they do honour to their maker. Thus, in all acts of faith, of worſhip, and obedience, we glorify God.

We glorify God when we do what demonſtrates a ſtedfaſt dependance upon him, as a being infinitely powerful and wiſe and good, and fit to be the object of our truſt. *Call*

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upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee and thou ſhalt glorify me. Pſalm l. 15. And 1 Pet. iv. 16. *Yet if any man ſuffer as a Chriſtian, let him not be aſhamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf:* As if he had ſaid, Let him act, with an undaunted heart and a chearful countenance, as one that does eſpouſe the cauſe of diſtreſſed virtue; and let him ſuffer for it, confident that he is acting a wiſe and prudent, as well as a dutiful part; and depending upon the God whom he ſerves, for an abundant reward. You find this argument purſued a conſiderable length, and with great elegance, in the cxiiith Pſalm, where the author ſhews the vanity of idols; and calls upon men to truſt only in the Lord, *who made Heaven and Earth. Their idols are ſilver and gold, the work of men's hands; they have mouths, but they ſpeak not, eyes have they but they ſee not, they have ears but they hear not, noſes have they but they ſmell not, hands and feet but handle not nor walk, neither ſpeak they through their throat; they that make them are like unto them, and ſo is every one that truſteth in them; O houſe of Aaron! truſt in the Lord, he is their help and their ſhield.* And indeed, the ſenſe we have of divine power and perfection, is never expreſſed in ſtronger characters, or more affectingly, than when in the day of evil or calamity, or in

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SERM. VII. the approaches of danger, we do, with eaſy and quiet minds, rely upon God; maintaining a firm confidence in him, amidſt the moſt threatning appearances. In general, any act by which we manifeſt a ſenſe and perſuaſion of any of the divine perfections, does ſo far honour to God. Thus you ſee in the caſe of Achan in the Hiſtory of Joſhua, ch. vii. 19; when by the ſacred lot he was fixed upon as the perſon that had tranſgreſſed the law of God, Joſhua ſays to him, *My ſon, I pray thee give glory to the Lord God of Iſrael, and make confeſſion to him, and tell me now what thou haſt done, hide it not from me:* meaning, that he ſhould, by an open confeſſion, glorify that Being who ſees in ſecret, and from whoſe eye nothing can be concealed.

But further, in all the homage and worſhip we pay our Creator, we are ſaid to glorify God; *whoſo offereth praiſe glorifieth me.* We glorify him when we ſolemnly aſcribe honour and glory to him. The ſcriptures, you know, are full of this; it is a very important part of our worſhip, and the moſt natural expreſſion imaginable of our ſenſe of the divine glory and perfection.

But there is ſtill another method by which we glorify God, in the moſt ſubſtantial manner; namely, ſubmitting to, and obeying him. John xv. 8. *Herein is my Father glo-*

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rified, that you bear much fruit, ſo ſhall ye be my diſciples. And xvii. 4. our Lord in his ſolemn prayer to the Father, ſays, *I have glorified thee on earth, I have finiſhed the work thou gaveſt me to do:* To this purpoſe alſo our Lord ſpeaks, concerning the glory to the divine Being that ſhould ariſe from the good works of his diſciples; *let your light ſo ſhine before men, that others, ſeeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in Heaven.* And the Apoſtle Paul in 1 Cor. ch. vi. after he had ſtrictly prohibited the pollutions of the fleſh, and enjoined purity of behaviour, adds, *therefore glorify God in your body, and in your ſpirit, which are God's*; meaning, that by maintaining our purity we do honour to God. And Rev. xv. 4. *Who ſhall not fear thee, O Lord! and glorify thy name, for thou only art holy?* And ſo in 1 Pet. iv. 11. *If any man ſpeak, let him ſpeak as the oracles of God; if any man miniſter, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified.* But it is not neceſſary to mention the many other paſſages to this purpoſe: For it is plain that, in the ſcripture ſtyle, we are ſaid to glorify God, when in our conduct we ſhew an humble and ſubmiſſive regard to him; and imitate his glorious perfections; God is likewiſe ſaid to be glorified by the obſervations that others make of this; while they

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SERM. VII. they do honour to the God of Chriſtians; and from the purity and goodneſs of their lives, infer the purity and goodneſs of the Being they worſhip.

Upon the whole, we ſee, that as the eſſential glory of God conſiſts in the unchangeable perfections of his nature, his power and wiſdom and goodneſs; ſo he is ſaid to glorify himſelf, when he manifeſts theſe perfections to the intelligent world: And his creatures are ſaid to glorify him, when they do honour to him as a Being of ſuch perfections, in their faith, worſhip and obedience; which are the proper expreſſions of the ſenſe they have of the glory of God.

It may be added, for the fuller explanation of the phraſe of glorifying God eſpecially as uſed in the Old Teſtament, that the Jews to whom God revealed himſelf, were encompaſſed with nations that worſhiped idols; deities that were the creatures of ſuperſtitious imagination; many of whom were ſuppoſed to be impure, and cruel; and in the worſhip offered to them, rites moſt barbarous, and moſt abominable, were uſed; ſuch idolatrous worſhip therefore muſt be ſuppoſed to have had an unhappy and pernicious influence upon the morals of men. Now the great end of the Jewiſh religion was to make known to men the true God; and to eſtabliſh it as a fundamental

a fundamental in religion, that there is but one God. Accordingly, through the whole Moſaic diſpenſation, and indeed through the whole of the Old Teſtament, particular care is taken to guard the worſhipers of the true God from all kinds of idolatry, and to ſhew a jealouſy of the leaſt approaches to it; and we find that the power and holineſs of God are often inſiſted on, in oppoſition to the impotent and impure Deities of the heathens: Which argument is purſued particularly by the Prophet Iſaiah, in the xlivth and other chapters of his prophecy; where he does, with moſt ſevere raillery, expoſe the vanity and folly of men who worſhiped idols; and calls upon mankind to return to the worſhip of that God, who made all things, who declares the end from the beginning, who governs the world with abſolute ſway, and who has infinite power and goodneſs, to hear and help his votaries. Nor is this argument only proſecuted in the Old Teſtament, in a very particular manner, and with great ſtrength of reaſon, as of the greateſt importance; but it is alſo not improbable that it was one, perhaps the principal end, of that train of miracles which are recorded in the Jewiſh hiſtory, to ſhew an undeniable interpoſition of a power that was worthy of divinity; and SERM. VII.

SERM. VII. to prove to all conſidering perſons, that the God whom the Jewiſh nation ſerved, was the only living and true God: In order that the Jews themſelves might be eſtabliſhed in this principle; and that the world about them might be enlightened concerning it. Nor was this unneceſſary; for we find there was in mankind a very amazing proneneſs to idolatry: And this not only where the religious rites, though fooliſh, and without reaſon, were not in themſelves hurtful; but even where they were abominable, and moſt unnaturally cruel; as in the known inſtance of men's ſacrificing their own children to their Gods; which was often done, and that by the moſt illuſtrious families, nay by order of the State. Indeed, the Jews themſelves were ſtrangely infected with this diſtemper; and from the beginning down to the Babyloniſh captivity, were on every occaſion going after the Gods of the nations around them. Againſt this impious practice a great jealouſy is expreſſed throughout the ſcriptures. And it is with an eye to this that glorifying God is ſo much inſiſted on; every worſhiper of the true God being called upon, and ſtirred up to do honour to him, in oppoſition to the groſs and impure idolatry of the pagan nations: which honour was paid to him, by

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a ſtrict adherence to that manner of worſhip he preſcribed; but, eſpecially by faith and moral obedience. When men ſhewed a ſenſe of the power and perfections of God, and that they could with eaſy minds depend upon him in all circumſtances; when they followed his dictates, though at the expence of expoſing themſelves to the moſt imminent danger, and to manifold evils; when they did not dread, under any diſadvantages, to contend with their enemies, aſſured their God was upon their ſide; all this ſhewed a deference, and did an honour to the true God, that was worthy of him; and muſt have been affecting, and uſeful to all who obſerved them. SERM. VII.

But further, it is very natural to think that men ſhould frame their ſentiments and conduct, according to the apprehenſions they had of the nature, and attributes of the Deities they worſhiped. It was to be expected that men who ſerved Gods ſuppoſed to be impure and cruel, ſhould become ſuch themſelves: Now this muſt have been a great reproach to ſuch Deities; men capable of thinking, who ſaw idolaters very licentious and barbarouſly cruel; as alſo, that their very religion tended to make them ſo; muſt have had a very bad opinion of their Gods, and have

SERM. VII. pronounced them what they really are, vanity and abomination. On the contrary, when men were ſtrictly virtuous and good, when they were pure in their morals, charitable and tender hearted; and at the ſame time profeſſed a religion that had a manifeſt tendency to eſtabliſh them in the practice of theſe virtues; this ſurely muſt have raiſed, in deliberate obſervers, a very good opinion of the Divinity ſuch men ſerved; they could not but look upon him as a pure, and holy, and good, as well as a powerful and great Being. From this it is evident that the exact religious obedience of the worſhipers of the true God, muſt contribute greatly to his honour, and ſo be of great uſe to the world. Accordingly, this is very much inſiſted on in the holy ſcriptures. *Let your light ſo ſhine before men, that they, ſeeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven.* And, *Having your converſation honeſt among the Gentiles; that whereas they ſpeak againſt you as evil doers, they may, by your good works which they behold, glorify God in the day of viſitation.* And again, *Wherefore alſo we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleaſure of his goodneſs and the work of Faith with power, that the name of our*

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Lord Jeſus Chriſt may be glorified. And, *Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, ſo ſhall ye be my diſciples.* In a word, it is moſt plain that we cannot any way, do real honour to the God we ſerve, but by the obedience of our lives. This is the mirrour which beſt reflects his perfections as objects of imitation to the world; and our moſt effectual method of engaging men, to his worſhip and ſervice. It is true indeed, that we are not converſant among men who know not the true God; and worſhip idols in his place; but yet we converſe with multitudes, who ſeem, in a great meaſure, to forget God: multitudes who embrace principles, and follow ſchemes of religion, that are ſubverſive of its true intereſts. In both caſes, the irregular and ſcandalous lives of profeſſors of the true religion, may lay in very ſtrong, I do not ſay, juſt, prejudices againſt it; as alſo againſt the principles and methods of that party which may really be the beſt, and moſt conformable to genuine chriſtianity. It is, therefore, of the utmoſt importance, that men who hold the beſt principles, ſhould live up to them; and by the exact purity and charity of their lives, ſecure to religion a favourable teſtimony in the heart of every judicious and impartial obſerver.

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SERM. VII. As on the other hand, if the fruit they bring forth, inſtead of being *righteouſneſs and peace*, is rather *gall and wormwood*; they will thereby harden ſome in a negligence of all religion; and give others a very diſadvantageous opinion of the principles they profeſs.

Nothing, in the firſt ages, was of equal importance to the converſion of the world to the chriſtian faith, as the innocence and purity, the humility and goodneſs, the patience and fortitude, the mortification and heavenly mindedneſs of thoſe who profeſſed it. It has been often obſerved, and very juſtly, that this recommended the religion of Chriſt far more effectually, than any other means; and made it proſper in the world. It was owing to this ſpirit of primitive chriſtianity, that the moſt fierce and cruel perſecutions, ſo far from deſtroying, really were the means of promoting it. And indeed, while mankind are not utterly loſt to the ſentiments of virtue and humanity, which never will nor can be the caſe, nothing will ever ſo effectually work upon, and gain them, as an uniform regularity of life, and virtuous and good affections, in the profeſſors of the true religion.

But farther, that we may entertain ſentiments concerning the glory of God, the moſt enlarged and generous; we muſt conſider him

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as having originally framed a ſcheme, which he is every day, by the various methods of his Providence, carrying on; in which his perfections are in the beſt manner diſplayed, and the greateſt poſſible good will be affected. This is the true glory of God. He will communicate to his creatures, all the happineſs that can be communicated, conſiſtently with his all glorious perfections; this renders his work honourable, and his praiſe everlaſting. Now, in this ſcheme he has placed us, as moral agents in a double capacity. By our agency we become the means and inſtruments of our own, and others' felicity: that is, by our acting a part ſuitable to the law of our natures; a benevolent, and virtuous, and good part, we are capable of promoting the great deſign of heaven with reſpect to ourſelves and others. Now, ſurely, we glorify God, in the moſt important ſenſe of that word, when with reſpect to ourſelves and others, we do all that is in our power to promote that end, which indeed conſtitutes the divine glory, and for which he made the world. SERM. VII.

It has been already obſerved, that the glory of God muſt conſiſt in communicating; for he cannot poſſibly receive from any one. With reſpect to ourſelves therefore, we glo-

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rify him moſt effectually, and anſwer his divine purpoſe, when we purſue thoſe meaſures in the conduct of life, which beſt prepare us for that felicity he has promiſed to beſtow: we then beſt glorify God, when we ſo live as to become the objects of his favour; and capable of enjoying that dignity and bliſs, which his goodneſs will confer. The glory and happineſs of his ſervants, in a ſtate perfect and everlaſting, is an illuſtration of divine glory, above all other things.

So likewiſe, with reſpect to others, we glorify God, when we do all in our power, to carry on this great and moſt benevolent ſcheme to its final completion. Human agency, though comparatively very inconſiderable, may yet here be of great importance. Men in all ſtations, have opportunity of doing good; in ſome ſtations indeed, of doing very great and laſting good to the world; and to the cauſe of truth and virtue. How honourable now, to have the power and opportunity of ſerving ſuch an intereſt; of contributing to that divine ſcheme, in which, when completed, the glory of God will ſhine with all its luſtre! It was in this manner that our bleſſed Redeemer glorified his heavenly father! And as he was worthy of acting the chief part in this ſacred tranſaction,

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ſo is a ſtation aſſigned him, of all the moſt honourable. All his faithful ſervants, in their ſeveral ſtations are to engage in the ſame ſervice; they ſhew forth his honour: Each of them acting his appointed part, in that great drama whch the Author of the univerſe accounts his glory: thus they anſwer the end of being; and thus only do they glorify God. Nay, thoſe creatures in the world of life, which are in their ſeveral orders, inferior to mankind, and even the inanimate parts of the creation, are ſaid to praiſe God. The meaning of which figurative and poetic expreſſion, is no more than that they manifeſt the power and perfection of the Creator of all, in ſerving the purpoſes for which they were created. So does the ſun glorify the Creator, by giving us day; the moon, by governing the night; the ſtars alſo in their ſeveral orbs; the earth by its viciſſitude of ſeaſons; and innumerable living creatures that inhabit it, by anſwering the particular ends of enjoyment, or uſefulneſs, for which they were contrived, and placed as parts of the one great ſyſtem. Juſt ſo, as has been ſhewn, mankind acting the part that becomes them as moral agents; and by the practice of virtue, attaining to happineſs themſelves; and promoting the virtue and happineſs of others; thus,

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thus, I ſay, do they glorify God, thus do they contribute their utmoſt to the perfection of the immenſe whole, in which the glory of God is diſplayed. They ſhew forth the glorious dignity of his work, in their own moral perfection and happineſs; and contribute what they can to the perfection of it, in others. On the whole, to conclude this head, you ſee what is properly meant by glorifying God: namely, doing honour to him by ſuch expreſſions of faith, ſuch acts of worſhip, and obedience, as ſhew our ſenſe of his high perfections; and do the greateſt juſtice to them in our power. While, at the ſame time, theſe are the means of ſerving that ultimate and greateſt end, the preparation of ourſelves and others, for that ſtate, in which God will be, to the utmoſt, *glorified in his Saints*.

I now proceed to the ſecond head, namely,

In what ſenſe the glory of God is to be the end of our actions. *Whatſoever you do, whether you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God. Glorify God in your bodies, and ſpirits, which are the Lord's.* And to the ſame purpoſe, the Apoſtle Paul, Rom. xii. 1. *I beſeech you therefore brethren, that you preſent your bodies*, that is, yourſelves, *a living ſacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reaſonable*

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able ſervice. In other words, that you live intirely devoted to the purpoſes of God's glory. We are here taught then, that the end of all our actions ought to be the glory of God.

But now, to ſhew in what ſenſe this is to be underſtood, that it may be conſiſtent with truth and fact, and that it may be indeed a reaſonable ſervice: It will never ſurely be pretended, that the glory of God is to be conſidered as ſeparate from happineſs and uſefulneſs; which are manifeſtly, the direct ends of human life; and indeed ſuch ſeparation is impoſſible: For we can glorify God no otherwiſe, than by being uſeful, and being happy. At the ſame time, we find that the ſeveral affections by which we are led to theſe ends, that is, ſelf-love and benevolence, do both reſt upon their reſpective objects, as their ultimate end. No one could ſpeak more unintelligibly, and abſurdly, than to ſay, that the love of ourſelves pointed to the glory of God; and not to our own happineſs, as its proper end. Nor can any one ſay, that the love of our neighbour points to the glory of God, and not to the happineſs of our neighbour, as its proper end. It is very apparent, that theſe affections as ſuch, muſt, and cannot but reſt on private and public good, as the true

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true ends of them: Indeed as the very ends of our being, which they manifeſtly are. And it is impoſſible that our acting to ſerve theſe ends, as the true ends of being, ſhould be wrong; unleſs the very frame of our nature is wrong, and thoſe affections of ſelf-love and benevolence, which are inſeparable from ſuch ends, are likewiſe wrong; which ſurely no man can imagine.

But farther, it is impoſſible we ſhould glorify God, but by purſuing the tendencies of thoſe affections, and the proper ends of them: For our departing from them, would be rebellion againſt God; and therefore a diſhonouring of him. If we are diſpoſed really to do him honour; it muſt be by purſuing the law of our own natures; by doing good, to ourſelves, and others. And this will lead us to the true meaning of aiming at the glory of God as our end. It is evident that our being diſpoſed to do him honour, will determine us to ſubmit to his laws, the laws of nature, and of revelation; and it is equally plain, that if we do this, we muſt be worthy and happy. Now, as we have a variety of inſtincts and affections in us, liable to great irregularities, much wanting diſcipline, and often needing to be controlled; ſo, a conſtant regard to the divine glory, a diſpoſition, in all things, to

honour

honour our Creator; will be a very powerful controlling principle in the mind, and greatly, indeed nothing in a generous heart more powerful, to correct irregular affection and desire. And never, when we are either tempted to an ill thing, or doubt concerning doing, or forbearing to do; never, I say, will we find a safer way of directing ourselves, than by considering whether such or such an action, will do honour to our maker; whether it becomes a zeal for his glory; whether it is perfectly consistent with the delicacy of that regard, which is so justly due to him: For if not, then an ingenuous mind will certainly reject it. And thus, in all our actions, regard to the glory of God will be a controlling principle. Not that we must necessarily, in every particular action of life, have this regard explicitly in our thoughts. But that we should be so habitually disposed, as that the principle may, in a manner insensibly, work in us; that all our sentiments, and conduct, should take a certain tincture from it; and that in all important cases, we should deliberately study to promote our Maker's glory. This will not counteract the true particular ends of life; but be a very effectual security of our serving them: For the mind that is disposed in this manner, will, for the sake of doing honour

SERM. VII. honour to its Maker, give up all those little private interests and gratifications, which are inconsistent with virtue and religious obedience.

And this great principle will be a powerful incentive to virtue. No motive more proper to work upon an ingenuous mind, either in reconciling men to the severities of self-denial, or making them active and diligent in the performance of their duty; it is, to sum up all, a worthy principle of action, and it will, when cordially entertained, prove most efficacious.

And this leads me, in conclusion, to recommend to you a spirit of zeal for the glory of God; a spirit becoming us as Christians, as well as exceedingly useful. Such zeal will be an excellent preservative from evil; it will point all the affections right, whether they be private or public; and will give an additional spring to them. We know, moreover, that God will accept the services done to him from principle, and will amply reward them. Sure it is, there can no principle be more natural to the human heart; nor any affection which ingenuity does more rejoice in exercising, than that of paying respect, and doing honour, to eminent worth. He is accounted very justly, of an abandoned and most corrupted character,

who

who feels no ſuch reſpect, and veneration; for this is often found, where we ſee little elſe of the ſemblance of virtue, and is perhaps, the laſt good affection that forſakes a vicious mind. Does not all this ſhew, that it is moſt natural, moſt reaſonable, that we ſhould do honour to our Maker, by all means poſſible? In him there is infinite worth; he is without compariſon, the moſt glorious character, incomprehenſibly glorious: He is our Creator, and the father of our ſpirits; he is our conſtant benefactor; the only ſure object of our hope and confidence. *Whom have we in heaven but God, or on earth that we can deſire beſides him?* How loſt muſt we have become to ingenuity, to gratitude, to all ſenſe and goodneſs, if we are rebellious againſt God! If by tranſgreſſions we diſhonour his name; or if we are utterly negligent of his glory!

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There are too many of that unhappy character, that *God is not in all their thoughts*; nor in their mouths, but when they prophane his name by taking it utterly in vain; which is ſcandalouſly frequent. The ſpirit of true zeal for God is greatly wanting! For it would be proſtituting that ſacred name, to give it to paſſion for party or denomination; for rite or ceremony; for certain ſetts of principles; as

that

SERM. VII. that zeal is often found to dwell with a temper and life, which are far from doing honour to God. I ſay, true zeal for what is, really, the glory of God, is greatly wanting. It ſeems indeed to have become an unfaſhionable thing; and it is to be feared, in the conceptions of ſome men, even reproachful. To theſe there never wants raillery ready to be pointed againſt ſuch as ſhew that regard for their Maker, as makes them dare to be ſingular; who can brook, with undiſturbed minds, any ludicrous or unfair light, in which ſatire can ſet their temper and conduct. But, ſurely, the more this is ſeen to be the diſtemper of the age, the more ought the votaries of true religion to ſet themſelves againſt it; ever zealous to do honour to that ſacred name, which others prophane. One cannot help thinking, that every ingenuous heart muſt feel indignation ſpring up in it, when men are heard to ſay, and ſeen to do things that are a reproach and diſhonour to their Maker; things which betray an utter negligence of that holy preſence which is ever with us: nor is it eaſy to conceive any thing more odious, and contemptible, than that ſpurious wit, which ſets itſelf in oppoſition to the divine honour; or, which is the ſame thing, to the ſteady undiſſembled practice of real religion

ligion and virtue. Nor can any man act a better part in life, than to give theſe, on all occaſions, the full weight of his intereſt and example. What profound reſpect and veneration ought we to pay to the father of our ſpirits! our omnipotent and moſt faithful friend! the guide of our way! the ſole object of our higheſt truſt and hope! how ſhould we avoid the haunts of thoſe unhappy men, who glory in what is their greateſt ſhame; who ſeem to take pleaſure in what is real indignity to that Being, *in whoſe hand their breath is, and whoſe are all their ways!* SERM. VII.

SERMON VIII.

The ſcripture doctrine of the mediation of Chriſt explained.

1 TIMOTHY II. 5.

For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Chriſt Jeſus; who gave himſelf a ranſom for all, to be teſtified in due time.

SERM. VIII. IT is apparent from innumerable and obvious inſtances, that the ſupreme Being ſerveth the great deſigns he hath formed, (and which, in the courſe of his providence, he is daily carrying into execution) very much by the intervention and agency of his creatures. Theſe, according to their various orders, and the powers conferred upon them, have different parts aſſigned them to act; ſome of greater, ſome of leſs importance; the lower for inſtance, or brutal orders, appear to act under the direction of inſtinct; but the higher, who are voluntary

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voluntary and moral agents, and capable of obedience to laws, in the proper ſenſe of that word, acting from counſel, and deſign, and choice; endowed, by the Maker of all, with affections adapted to the ſtate in which they are placed, the relations in which they ſtand to other beings, and to thoſe ſervices in the Creation, which they are called to perform. Thus He who is the original fountain of perfection and happineſs to all, hath ſo contrived the general plan of the univerſe, that his creatures ſhall be the means and inſtruments of communicating happineſs to one another; and to this nature prompteth them; being furniſhed with principles and affections, which not only excite to acts of beneficence, but render ſuch acts, when performed from real good will, moſt pleaſing and grateful to their reflecting thoughts; to which thoughts beneficence will ever appear a moſt excellent thing.

It is worthy our obſervation, that as far as we are acquainted with the intellectual and moral creation, there is no creature in that rank, but who is capable of ſome uſeful ſervice, of ſome acts of beneficence; thus contributing his ſhare as a member of the great community, and partaking in that happineſs which is annexed to the doing of good. Amongſt mankind, even thoſe of the very

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loweſt form, and who have the moſt ſcanty meaſure of abilities, yet, in ſome ſtations and circumſtances, may be uſeful: Things are ſo deſigned and contrived, and that mutual dependance, which is one great cement of ſociety, ariſes from ſo many complicated wants, as render proportionably various ſervices neceſſary; ſome of them indeed of comparatively ſmall importance; that there is no man, for whom a ſtation may not be found, in which his powers applied with worthy and good diſpoſitions, will render him ſerviceable; and even, as ſuch low ſervices muſt be performed, ſignificant. How much more then are perſons in high ſtation, of ſuitable abilities and goodneſs of diſpoſition, prepared for very great ſervices, and for diffuſing much happineſs around them! Theſe indeed are the faireſt images of Divinity upon earth, and muſt reliſh the higheſt pleaſure.

When we therefore turn our thoughts to the orders of being above us, it is eaſy to conceive there may be individuals, of the angelic kind ſuppoſe, of much higher endowments than any mortal; and who act in a much more important and extenſive ſphere. Still farther, when we aſcend above the angelic orders, we ſee one, in whoſe peculiar relation to the Father of all, and in whoſe glory

glory and perfection we are inſtructed by re- SERM.
velation only; who is deſcribed as *the begin-* VIII.
ning of the creation of God; by whom God made the worlds; by whom all things conſiſt; and who is the Heir of all things, and head over them. By this divine perſon the goodneſs of God floweth out, in the richeſt abundance, to our world, and to the human race. In which reſpect, above all others, he is *the brightneſs of the Father's glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon.* And, as the holy ſcriptures have acquainted us with the being of ſuch a perſon, ſo the ſtation aſſigned him by the ſacred writers (ſo important, and the means of ſuch happineſs to the world) is perfectly ſuitable to the ſubſerviency above obſerved, of voluntary moral agents to the happineſs of others. In this ſenſe, then, the Son of God is the mediator between the Father and us, that by him we receive the greateſt, and moſt invaluable bleſſings.

But farther, the holy ſcriptures direct us to conſider the Son of God, our Saviour, as the mediator of peace and reconciliation with God, to whoſe diſpleaſure mankind were, by ſin, univerſally expoſed; and as the word is, in common converſation, often uſed to ſignify a perſon who interpoſes to reconcile parties at variance; ſo the reconciliation of the world, at a fatal moral diſtance from

SERM. VIII. God, is aſcribed to the interpoſition of our bleſſed Lord, as the great appointed means of its accompliſhment: And in this reſpect, more peculiarly, he is our only mediator. That the apoſtle, in the words of the text, ſpoke of him as, in this ſenſe, our mediator with God, is evident from the 6th verſe; *who gave himſelf a ranſom for all, to be teſtified in due time.*

This then is the ſubject upon which I propoſe at preſent to diſcourſe. And I ſhall firſt lay before you the ſcriptural account of it, ſummed up, as briefly as may be; ſecondly, inquire into the ends to be ſerved by the mediation of our Lord; and ſhew how, as a means, the various parts he acted, anſwered theſe ends; and then make reflexions upon the whole, with a particular view to the removing of ſome difficulties, which have been thought greatly to embaraſs this ſubject.

Firſt then, briefly to lay before you the ſcriptural account of this matter. Now this account is as follows: that mankind having univerſally perverted their way, and having been in a ſtate of moral darkneſs, guilt, and corruption; liable to the divine diſpleaſure; it pleaſed God, in his infinite goodneſs and clemency, to ſend his only begotten ſon, to ſeek and ſave them, from this deplorable ſtate: And, to prepare the world for the introduction

tion and appearance of this divine perſon, many predictions, ſome even from the very early ages, were publiſhed concerning him; nay, the Jewiſh religious conſtitution is repreſented as, in many inſtances, typical of him, and as ſhadowing out his prieſthood and kingdom. That, in the fulneſs of time appointed by the father, he accordingly came into the world; took our nature upon him, with it's ſinleſs infirmities; converſed with mankind; by his doctrines and precepts laying the foundations of a kingdom of truth and righteouſneſs; in ſubſtance the ſame with that which the God of nature had originally founded in the heart of man. That when he had fulfilled his public perſonal miniſtry, the divine authority of which was clearly evinced by the many miracles he worked; he then, according to the counſels of the father, gave himſelf up to ſuffering, and to the death of the croſs. There, in ſcripture language, *he offered himſelf a ſacrifice for ſin: ſhed his blood for the remiſſion of it; and gave himſelf a ranſom for many.* That he roſe again from the dead; and becauſe he *humbled himſelf, and became obedient to death, even the death of the croſs; therefore God hath alſo highly exalted him*; hath placed him at his own right hand; ſubjected all things to him; made him head over all, and gave him all power

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power and authority, in heaven and on earth; which power and kingdom he will retain till the conſummation of all things; *when he is to deliver up the kingdom to God, even the father, that God may be all in all.* That we are to regard him as conſtituted by the father, to be our head and Lord; that from him immediately, we receive the bleſſings and advantages of the goſpel kingdom and diſpenſation; that he hath unalterably fixed the terms of our acceptance, and ſalvation; and that he is appointed to be our judge, at the great day.

Theſe are the main things taught us in Scripture, concerning the mediation of our bleſſed Saviour. And there ſhould ſeem no need of multiplying words to ſhew that this is, in truth, a moſt amazing ſcene; that nothing of a more intereſting nature can enter into the heart of man: nor is it poſſible for any thinking perſon to believe it, without ſeeing that it demands his ſerious attention, eſpecially with regard to the improvement to be made of it.

Let us, in the next place, conſider the ends to be anſwered by this interpoſition of the only begotten Son of God. And, in general, the raiſing of mankind, dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, to a holy and divine life, and to the happineſs which is annexed to it;

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was unqueſtionably the great end; the promoting of moral excellence and of bleſſedneſs, in the creation of God! This is the nobleſt, the moſt important of all deſigns; of all others, moſt worthy of the ſupreme Being! It is an end, for the ſerving of which, nothing whatſoever that can be done, is too great or too wonderful. The events, indeed, which are the ſubject of this diſcourſe, relating to the mediation of our Saviour, may appear beyond expreſſion wonderful; but, when we conſider the grand deſign, and that rectitude and holineſs are the moſt excellent things in the creation of God, indeed the glory of God himſelf; we ſhall then ſee that it is impoſſible to think any thing too great to be uſed, as a means of promoting them in the univerſe. SERM. VIII.

But, to deſcend more particularly into the conſideration of this ſubject; and to ſhew how the part our Saviour ſuſtained, and what he did and ſuffered, tend to promote this great deſign; it may be obſerved;

Firſt, that he was of the higheſt importance to this end, as he became a *light to the world*; that men *might not ſit in darkneſs*, but have *the light of life*. Without light there can be no life: Accordingly, he gave the cleareſt and fulleſt inſtructions, and with the greateſt and moſt unqueſtionable authority:

Thus

SERM. VIII. Thus moſt effectually putting his diſciples into the only true way to ſalvation; delivering them from ignorance and darkneſs, from the bondage of ſuperſtition, and furniſhing them with thoſe principles, which are the ſources of all that is good and happy.

Secondly, as our bleſſed Saviour, *the day-ſpring from on high*, diffuſed that moſt glorious light, which of all things was moſt neceſſary to anſwer his great and good deſign, of ſhewing men what they ought to do; ſo, does his mediation ſuggeſt to them, ſome moſt powerful motives to obedience; ſuch as are wonderfully fitted to work on an ingenuous heart.

Herein, moſt remarkably, the Love of the Father towards mankind appeared, and his earneſtneſs for their ſalvation —earneſtneſs, we may well call it, after our way of conceiving and ſpeaking; becauſe ſuch it would really be, in any being to whom ſuch a feeling may be properly aſcribed: and though the abſolute perfection of the ſupreme Being places him above the affection to which we give that name; yet there muſt be even in him ſomething analogous to it; ſuch a deſire of an event, as determines him to do, whatever is to bring it to paſs: — I ſay, this great work ſhews the earneſtneſs of the Father of mercies, for our ſalvation. It was ſuch that

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He *ſpared not his own ſon, but gave him up* SERM.
to the death for us all. How important then VIII.
muſt our ſalvation be, how dear an object to him! what gratitude do we not owe him! what may we not expect from him! and how glorious muſt this ſalvation be!

Again, the manner in which our redemption and ſalvation is effected, namely, by the incarnation, the ſufferings, and death of the ſon of God, as it is full of inſtruction, ſo it is alſo of moſt perſuaſive tendency to engage the heart, to fill it with a juſt ſenſe of the things which concern our ſalvation, and with the moſt uſeful ſentiments. God ſendeth his own ſon, in fleſh, who came (in obedience to the Father) to accompliſh an end, which did the higheſt honour to the Father; and ſhewed, through the whole of the part he acted, a merit the moſt conſummate that ever was exhibited onthe thetre of this world. As the reward of this, the Father exalts him to the higheſt and moſt important ſtation; inveſting him with all power and authority; placing the conduct of our ſalvation in his hands; particularly giving him authority to pardon the ſins of the truly penitent, and to confer life eternal on them; and accordingly by him the great and precious promiſes of the new covenant, and the terms of our acceptance,

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are declared. This method of receiving the penitent into favour, and the honour which is done by it to our mediator, that, through his hand, all bleſſings and advantages ſhould come to us; is the moſt ſolemn teſtimony which God could give to mankind, of his regard to what is excellent and worthy: that nothing is, in his eſtimation, to be compared to it; and that the higheſt honours, and happineſs, will always be conferred upon the greateſt merit. But then, it is not poſſible to conſider the matter in this light, without ſeeing that where ſuch approbation of and regard are ſhewn to exalted merit, there muſt be, at the ſame time, a proportionable diſpleaſure at ſin: for, that penitents receive the remiſſion of it, by an authority conferred as the reward of the moſt conſummate merit, cannot but point out to them the diſpleaſure of the ſupreme Being, at tranſgreſſion and guilt; nor can any other reaſon poſſibly be aſſigned, for their receiving pardon by ſuch a mediation: but this reaſon is obvious; it naturally, and neceſſarily enters into the mind, as ſomething analogous to this conduct, is familiar to us in the affairs of this world; in which perſons of particular merit are often honoured by ſuperiors, ſo far as that, by their mediation faults are forgiven, and favours conferred on perſons, whom

whom the ſuperior would impreſs with this ſentiment, that they had otherwiſe, no claim to ſuch favours, or that they had deſerved ill. SERM. VIII.

And, undoubtedly, to beget in the minds of men a juſt ſenſe of the excellence of righteouſneſs and goodneſs, of God's love and regard to it; and of the evil of ſin, and his diſpleaſure at it, is one of the nobleſt ends which can be ſerved; and we ſee it is a thing moſt difficult to be attained. Men may be convinced, by reaſoning, of both; but they cannot eaſily be made to feel (nay this is, perhaps one of the hardeſt things in the world) ſo as to determine them effectually in their conduct. So that if the interpoſition of our Saviour, and what he has done and ſuffered, hath a direct tendency to anſwer this end, it muſt then be acknowledged as highly worthy of him; and ſurely, if it hath ſuch a tendency at all, nothing can be a means more obvious, nor ſo effectual, When it is conſidered, that particularly for this purpoſe, among others, our bleſſed Saviour came, and ſuffered, and died; it muſt, above all things, impreſs the mind with ſuch a deep ſenſe of theſe moſt important matters, as our Maker would have us ever to retain. In fine, the ſum of the whole ſeemeth to be this, — God will pardon the ſincerely penitent; but he will

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will do it in ſuch a manner, as ſhall be to the whole intellectual and moral creation, the moſt ſolemn teſtimony of his love to purity, and holineſs, and goodneſs; and of his diſpleaſure at ſin; and which ſhall tend to impreſs this ſenſe of things moſt deeply, and indelibly, upon the minds of all who are concerned in it.

Here let it be obſerved, that the divine placability is not at all called in queſtion; nor any hopes or knowledge, which penitents might naturally have, of the remiſſion of ſins, by the goodneſs and clemency of God (though it muſt be owned, that great wilful tranſgreſſors, without ſome expreſs declaration on God's part, muſt ever be liable to much difficulty, and many painful apprehenſions in their own minds.) However, theſe things do not at all affect the preſent argument; for whether they had, or had not, ſuch hope or knowledge, is really nothing to the manner in which God is pleaſed to pronounce the pardon of ſin; nor, to whatever inſtructions, by the manner he choſe, were intended to be conveyed to us.

From what hath been ſaid we may likewiſe ſee how the voluntary ſufferings and death of our Saviour, have an influence and efficacy, as the means of our obtaining forgiveneſs of ſin: They have this efficacy, as they

they were the moſt conſpicuous acts of our Lord's conſummate merit, and by which it was completed, and he was perfected. As the Apoſtle obſerveth, Heb. ii, 10. *It became him by whom are all things, and for whom are all things, in bringing many ſons and daughters to glory, to make the Captain of our ſalvation perfect through ſuffering; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal ſalvation to all them who obey him.*

It is our Saviour's conſummate unequalled merit, which, by the Father's good pleaſure and appointment, lieth at the foundation of all this ſcheme. And as the laying down his life was that act which did the higheſt honour to the Father, and finiſhed our Saviour's merit, it is therefore ſpoken of, in ſcripture, as *our ranſom*, as *the atonement* for us, and in other ſuch expreſſions; all which ſeem to ſignify, that this laſt act of the ſcene was that which was moſt of all conſidered; and upon which our Saviour's exaltation *as a Prince and a Saviour*, followed.

Our bleſſed Lord tells us that *he ſhed his blood for the remiſſion of ſin*; that *he gave his life a ranſom for many*; and we are taught, that *he offered himſelf a* ſacrifice for ſin, that *he is the propitiation for our ſins*; and that *we are waſhed from our ſins in his blood*; with many other ſuch phraſes; ſome of which

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are plainly figurative; and cannot be taken in a ſtrictly proper ſenſe, without great abſurdity. But with reſpect to ſacrifices, it ſeems to have been the original intention of them to do honour to God; they were, indeed, a part of religious worſhip. Sacrifices for penitent offenders were offered as a ſolemn confeſſion, on the part of the offenders, of their guilt; and perhaps as an external expreſſion, and memorial, of what, in ſtrictneſs of law, they deſerved. Sacrifices were conſumed and deſtroyed; this has given ſome perſons an occaſion to ſay, that the ſacrifice underwent the deſtruction which the tranſgreſſor deſerved. Whatever the Jews thought in this matter, which it is not eaſy for us to know with certainty; yet we are ſure it bears no ſort of application to our Saviour; who, ſo far from periſhing in his death, was, as the reward of his ſubmitting to it, advanced to the higheſt and moſt important ſtation in the kingdom of God: wherefore, the ſacrifices under the law could bear no reſemblance to him, in this reſpect. We are alſo ſure that nothing can be pleaſing to God, or do him honour, but what is morally excellent and worthy. So that, though he was pleaſed with the ſacrifices under the law, when they were offered with ſincere hearts, and in obedience to him; yet we certainly know, that he could not be pleaſed

pleaſed with the blood of bullocks and of goats. That which rendered the death of our Lord ſo pleaſing and meritorious in his ſight, was its having been a moſt conſpicuous act of obedience; the moſt honourable and worthy concluſion of a life, in all reſpects perfect. As was ſaid before, our Saviour was perfected by it. Thus obtained he power to forgive ſin; and to be the *author of eternal ſalvation*. Therefore, ſo far is his death to be looked upon as a ſacrifice for ſin, as thereby he obtained power to pardon, to proclaim peace and reconciliation to the guilty. And that ſuch illuſtrious merit may be conſidered under the notion of atonement, will appear plain from a very remarkable paſſage in the book of Numbers, chap. xxv. When Phineas the prieſt inſtantly put to death an Iſraelite who had brought a Midianitiſh woman into his tent, in direct and moſt preſumptuous tranſgreſſion of the law of God; I ſay, when Phineas had put them both to death, this his zeal for the Divine honour was ſo well accepted of God, that he thus ſpoke to Moſes; *Phineas the ſon of Eleazar, the ſon of Aaron the prieſt, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Iſrael (while he was zealous for my ſake among them) that I conſumed not the children of Iſrael in my jealouſy. Where-*

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fore ſay, behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace, and he ſhall have it, and his ſeed after him, even the covenant of an everlaſting prieſthood, becauſe he was zealous for his God, and made an attonement for the children of Iſrael; who all of them, we ſee, reaped the happy fruits of this man's diſtinguiſhed zeal. How much more do we reap the fruits of our Lord's moſt perfect merit; whom God hath therefore crowned with authority to forgive us our ſins; and to pronounce us, on the terms of faith and repentance, in favour with our Maker.

The great thing to be attended to in this whole matter, is, that the greateſt honour is done to the Father of all; and to righteouſneſs, and true holineſs: Now this honour, certainly is the true intention of all ſacrifices: as it alſo is the intention which the authors of ſome ſchemes, with reſpect to our redemption by Chriſt, have profeſſed to purſue: who yet, by their explanations, without warrant from the holy ſcriptures, have laid Chriſtianity, in their ſenſe of that word, open to great objections, ſome of which ſeem unanſwerable; by a miſtaken zeal for the laws and the juſtice of God, explaining things ſo as to make him appear moſt terrible; as treating his offending creatures, in all the ſtrictneſs and rigour of law and juſtice; ſo that

that penitent pardoned ſinners are indeed under great obligations to their mediator and ſurety; but, properly ſpeaking, in the point of juſtification, meet with no clemency from their ſupreme Lord and judge, who is repreſented as exacting to the utmoſt; they ſpeak, accordingly, of penalties, of vindictive juſtice, of equivalent vicarious puniſhments, of proper ſatisfaction to juſtice, and ſuch other things, rather after the manner of human goverments, and human courts; without properly attending to it, that this is not the way in which the Father of mercies proceeds with his frail offending creatures: Thus do they involve themſelves in inextricable difficulties; ſtill, however, profeſſing that it is only the honour of God, and of his laws, which is intended to be ſupported and illuſtrated. But it will be evident to all who ſeriouſly attend, that the ſtrong figurative expreſſions of the New Teſtament, on which ſuch human ſchemes of redemption are founded, were intended to be uſed in an alluſive, and not at all a ſtrictly literal ſenſe; many of which, taken in ſuch a ſenſe, would lead us into the groſſeſt abſurdity. It is hoped the true meaning and deſign of them hath been already declared in this diſcourſe, namely, that God choſe to pardon penitent offenders, by the mediation of our Saviour, as a

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moſt ſolemn teſtimony to the intellectual and moral creation, of his regard and love to the higheſt moral excellence and merit of our Saviour; at the ſame time, as a ſtanding memorial of his diſpleaſure at tranſgreſſion and ſin; and that his counſel and deſign was, to impreſs on the minds of men this ſenſe of theſe matters, as deeply as poſſible. Thus, though we know, from the light of nature, the goodneſs and clemency of God, and are aſſured of them; yet the gift of the Son of God, to ſuffer and die for us, is an illuſtration of that goodneſs and clemency, which wonderfully raiſes our ſenſe of it, and giveth great gladneſs of heart; ſo, in like manner, though by the light of nature we know the excellence of moral rectitude and goodneſs, and the regard of the Father of all to it, with his diſpleaſure at willful tranſgreſſion; yet this illuſtration which we have of both, by the method of our ſalvation through Chriſt, may anſwer the worthieſt end, by exciting in us ſuch ſentiments of theſe things, and by affecting our minds to ſuch a degree, as we ſhould not have otherwiſe known. Let it be attended to, laſtly, that this particular end of the mediation, the ſuffering and death, of our Saviour, is never to be conſidered as detached from the other great purpoſes which are ſerved by it; ſuch

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as, the confirmation and eſtabliſhment of his religion; the giving us a moſt glorious and perfect example, in human nature, of every thing good and worthy; the doing honour to a ſtate externally low and afflicted; with ſuch other things as are to be taken into the account, in conſidering the deſign of this great tranſaction, and in illuſtrating the wiſdom of it. Upon the whole, it will appear that the Goſpel of our Saviour, and his interpoſition, according to the counſels of divine wiſdom and goodneſs, are not only of infinite uſe by the diffuſion of the true light of life; but alſo as they furniſh the moſt engaging motives to obedience, taken eſpecially from the love of God to mankind, manifeſted in his gift of Chriſt; and from the high honour and regard which is ſhewn to true righteouſneſs and holineſs, in this whole tranſaction. SERM. VIII.

Let it be obſerved, in concluſion, that when things are conſidered in this light, the greateſt difficulties which have been thought to preſs the chriſtian ſcheme, are removed; and the objections of its adverſaries admit of an eaſy anſwer. Thus there is nothing in Chriſtianity which is inconſiſtent with our natural notions of the divine perfections; or with the unalterable law written on the heart of man: True religion, conſiſting in the love of God and man, in purity, righteouſneſs, and chari-

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ty; practiſed under a ſenſe of the divine government, and with a diſpoſition to pleaſe God, is the ſame under all diſpenſations: And the favour of God will always follow the individuals who ſincerely practiſe them, in proportion to the degree of purity, righteouſneſs, and charity, to which they have attained; in other words, in proportion to the degree of their virtue; it is that only which can render us pleaſing in the ſight of our Maker; and all diſpenſations of religion, are, and can be, no more than means for accompliſhing the greateſt of all ends, namely promoting virtue, moral perfection, and the happineſs annexed to them. Now this is the whole intention purſued by all that our Saviour hath done, and ſuffered for us; all is a means of ſerving this great end; extraordinary indeed it may appear to us; but as extraordinary as it may ſeem, every wiſe man muſt acknowledge that the end hath a proportionable importance; being indeed, the moſt excellent which can be conceived.

But then, let it ever be our care that what our bleſſed Lord hath done and ſuffered, for our ſalvation, may have its proper weight and influence on our minds; engaging us to forſake evil, to love the Lord, and to work righteouſneſs: If it hath not this influence on us, it can be of no ſervice to us. We may conceive vain and deluſive hopes, but all theſe muſt

muſt vaniſh, as a dream when a man awaketh. Chriſt came to ſave us from our ſins; but not in the continued practice of them; which the unalterable moral conſtitution we are under, renders impoſſible. Happy they, who conſtrained by the love of God, and of Chriſt, and the other goſpel motives, give up themſelves as the faithful ſervants of God, and have it conſtantly at heart to obey the laws he hath given us; renouncing with indignation, whatever tends to render them diſloyal to, and ungratefully rebellious againſt him? Happy, forever happy ſhall they be, in that glorious ſtate in which they have fellowſhip with Chriſt himſelf; poſſeſſing all that was intended as the end of his moſt beneficent interpoſition, and of all that he did and ſuffered! And I beſeech you to conſider, whether any thing ſhould ſo much engage the heart of man, to a full, cordial, and reſolved compliance with the divine will; as this method which the wiſdom and goodneſs of God have deviſed for our ſalvation; againſt which there is, in reaſon, nothing to be objected; but either that the principal particular end, which in this diſcourſe hath been inſiſted on, namely, the exciting in Chriſtians, the deepeſt, and moſt powerful, and conſtraining ſenſe of the excellency of virtue, of God's regard to it, and of his diſpleaſure at ſin; that this

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particular end, I ſay, was not worthy to be ſerved by ſuch means; or that the means uſed are not properly adapted to ſerve the end. Now, that ſuch end is not worthy, or of importance enough to be ſerved by ſuch means it is thought no one will take upon him to ſay. It is, undoubtedly, the very greateſt thing which can be done for us, and abſolutely neceſſary to our ſalvation. Till we attain to a juſt ſenſe in matters of morality, and which concern our ſalvation, there is no real laſting good to be done in us, or for us; nothing will be right, till we attain to ſuch a ſenſe as will effectually mold our tempers, and determine our conduct; and therefore, if it was fit for our Saviour to interpoſe at all for our ſalvation, and to ſuffer and die, it was fit for him to do it, that this particular purpoſe might be anſwered. And as to the propriety of the means to anſwer this end, let every man judge, whether any thing can equally ſtrike his mind, or affect his heart, as ſuch an aſtoniſhing manner of God's bearing teſtimony of his regard and love to virtue; and his crowning it, in the perſon poſſeſſed of it in the higheſt poſſible degree, with ſuch ſingular and peculiar honour; which manner of bearing teſtimony to virtue, does at the ſame time, and cannot but teſtify his diſpleaſure at ſin; farther, let any man judge, whether any

any thing can equally impreſs his mind with a ſenſe of the earneſtneſs of the ſupreme Ruler, for delivering his creatures from the power of ſin, and engaging them to the practice of true holineſs, that they may obtain ſalvation, as the mediation of our Saviour, by his appointment. But, I ſay, may we feel the happy influences and effects of this amazing counſel upon our own hearts! Let us frequently reflect, how deplorable that ſtate, which even the Son of God came to redeem us from, at the expence to himſelf of ſuch ſufferings, and of ſuch a death! Let us ſeriouſly conſider how glorious that ſtate, into which, at ſuch expence to himſelf, he introduceth us; and lay our hearts open to the conſtraining power of his love! It is not in philoſophical or critical inquiries into this ſubject that we are principally concerned; but that we may anſwer, in the moſt effectual manner, the great deſign of the goſpel; and that we may be ſaved, in the day of the Lord Jeſus.

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SERMON

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What the ſentiments of angels concerning our preſent ſtate may be ſuppoſed to be; and the motives which ariſe from hence to conduct life wiſely and virtuouſly.

HEBREWS I. 14.

Are they not all miniſtering ſpirits ſent forth to miniſter for them who ſhall be heirs of ſalvation?

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cend into heaven? that is, to bring Chriſt down from above. Or, who ſhall deſcend into the deep? that is, to bring Chriſt up from the dead. But what ſaith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thine heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach, that if thou ſhalt confeſs with thy mouth the Lord Jeſus, and believe in thine heart that God raiſed him from the dead, thou ſhalt be ſaved. And, as the knowledge of what is neceſſary to be believed and done, is eaſily attained; ſo alſo the great arguments adapted to engage men in the performance of their duty, lie within a very narrow compaſs; being found in the acknowledged dignity and excellence of an holy and good life; in the innumerable benefits and advantages which are annexed to it in this world; in the favour of God which will always follow it; and in the aſſurances of a glorious immortality, as the ample reward in reſerve for the righteous. All theſe things are plain and obvious. But then it will likewiſe be acknowledged, that it may be very profitable to conſider in various views, the matters which concern our ſalvation; to ſet them in whatever light they may moſt affect the mind; to weigh all circumſtances which tend to make any impreſſion, and to engage us to that which is good. Now, amongſt theſe, the light in which our behaviour may appear to the orders of being above us, does

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That there are ſuperior orders of being; that there are angels, though to us inviſible, converſant alſo in our world, and concerned in its affairs; is plainly intimated in the holy ſcriptures. Concerning the exiſtence of ſuch beings, the light of nature, indeed, gives us no demonſtrative proof. Nor from what we ſee with our eyes, can we at all certainly infer that there are ſuch orders of creatures, as we do with the cleareſt evidence, from what we ſee of the works of nature, infer the exiſtence of an original intelligent cauſe, to which we aſcribe all of them. But yet, when we conſider that the intelligent principle within us, which is the ſubject of all our perceptions, the agent that thinks, and the cauſe of all voluntary actions, is a thing quite diſtinct in its nature from matter; though, in our frame and ſtate, united to it, and exerting its powers by means of corporeal organs; all this conſidered, it is eaſily ſuppoſable that, as this principle in us may exiſt out of its preſent material frame, as well as in it; ſo there may be other intelligent beings which never were, nor ever ſhall be, ſo united to matter. Beſides, we ſhall be inclined to think that there may be really ſuch kinds of creature, of a rank ſuperior to us, from what we ſee in the various gradations of nature, in the orders

orders of being beneath us. The leaſt excel- SERM. IX.
lent in kind, and the loweſt, is dead unorganized matter: Next to that appear the vegetable kinds; which have an organized form, and grow from ſmall ſeeds, many of them to very great bulk. But their life, however that word is uſed to expreſs their motion, and growth, ſhews nothing of ſenſation or action in it. Between the vegetable and animal there are certain kinds, which ſeem to partake of the nature of both. But then, from the loweſt in the animal kind, how many gradations are there, from leſs to more perfect and excellent, till we riſe to the higheſt ranks of mere animal life; which kinds, according to their ſeveral degrees, diſcover more or leſs of ſenſe, underſtanding, and active principle; but ſtill ſeem utterly void of all moral powers? Far above all theſe is man, conſtituted Lord of this ſublunary creation; made capable of knowing right and wrong; and favoured with a large meaſure of intellectual faculties and endowments. Thus, the works of God which we behold, from dead and unactive matter aſcend, ſtep by ſtep, to ſuch creatures and ſuch forms as fill us with high admiration. And then having once got the idea of immaterial ſubſtance, endowed with ſuch powers and faculties as the human ſoul, and which may ſubſiſt independent of matter, what a glorious ſcene opens to the mind! how many

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orders of ſuch creatures may be reaſonably ſuppoſed, ariſing to ſuch degrees of excellency, and power, and perfection, as exceed all our preſent conceptions! For, who can think that the great ſcale, and gradation of being ends intirely in man, when we ſee there may be ſo many orders of creatures riſing upwards ſuperior to him? If we look into the writings of the ancients, whether they ſtruck out the ideas of ſuch created ſuperior intelligences, from their own reaſoning; or, by tradition derived from original revelation; certain it is, they had notions of ſuch intelligences; and aſcribed to their agency many things in this world. However, we ſee in the holy ſcriptures this matter is put beyond doubt; we there have frequent mention of angels; of various orders of them; of vaſt numbers; and we alſo ſee, in ſeveral inſtances, that their power is very great: But what is moſt noticeable in their hiſtory, is, that as they were all made moral agents, the ſubjects of God's kingdom, and under a law to him; ſo while one part retained their purity, innocence, and loyalty to their Maker and ſupreme Lord; others, by tranſgreſſion, fell from the original dignity and glory of their ſtate; became very guilty, and very miſerable; *reſerved in chains of darkneſs unto the judgment of the great day*. But what is to our preſent purpoſe principally, is to obſerve, that numbers of

of angels both good and bad, are converſant in our world. The latter, by divine permiſſion, are repreſented as the authors of much evil, and ſuffering; while the former, as the miniſters of God's kingdom, are repreſented as ſerving the purpoſes of his providence. So Pſal. ciii, *Bleſs the Lord, ye angels! that excel in ſtrength, that do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word. Bleſs ye the Lord, all his hoſts! ye miniſters of his that do his pleaſure.* We read too, that *The chariots of God are thouſands of angels*; and you ſee, in the text, they are repreſented as *miniſtering ſpirits, ſent forth* by their and our head and Lord, *to miniſter to them who ſhall be heirs of ſalvation.* As to the particular inſtances we have of the miniſtry of angels, in ſcripture, in executing the divine purpoſes, whether of mercy or of judgment, they are ſo many, and muſt be ſo familiar to all who are converſant in ſcripture, that they need not be here mentioned. The ſcriptures indeed, from the beginning, are full of them: The names alſo of ſome angels are given us; and a particular account of the ſervices they performed. Sometimes they appeared in the human form; at other times they were inviſible; and no doubt it is in this manner they uſually perform the ſervices to which they are appointed. However, if we believe the accounts given us in the holy ſcriptures, we muſt be fully ſatisfied that they

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are very much converſant in our world; are attentive to the affairs of it, and are employed by providence, in conducting of them. And that we do not ſee them with our eyes, is no reaſon at all why we ſhould not believe the reality of their preſence among us; and that many events are brought to paſs by their means.

It may be then of ſome uſe, to conſider what thoſe bleſſed ſpirits may be ſuppoſed to think of us; how they regard our ſtate and affairs, our pleaſures and pains; eſpecially when it is conſidered that, in a little time we ſhall be diveſted of theſe groſs bodies, and placed in a ſtate like theirs, in this reſpect.— I ſay, this conſideration may be of uſe to us: For aſſuredly, if we could ſee, with our bodily eyes, theſe miniſters of the divine kingdom converſant among us, beings of ſuch excellent power and dignity, of ſuch ſpotleſs purity and goodneſs, in a particular manner alſo friendly to mankind; — if we thus ſaw them in our ſolitary walks, or in our aſſemblies, we ſhould think great reſpect and reverence due to them; we ſhould labour to approve to them our ſentiments and our conduct. Now, if they are really amongſt us, though the bodily eye does not diſcern them, ſurely we owe them ſuitable regard. One would think that natural diſpoſition to act with decency before our fellow creatures of the ſame ſpecies, and to endeavour to approve ourſelves

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to them, eſpecially to the wiſe and good; ſhould operate, very ſenſibly, with reſpect to ſuperior orders of being, who may be ſuppoſed to be witneſſes to our conduct; to know, and regard our tempers, inclinations, and ſentiments, as manifeſted in our behaviour. May it not therefore, be of uſe to attend to this; and to conſider how theſe excellent ſpirits may be affected towards us? If what we know to be the eſtimation of perſons of our own ſpecies concerning us, has ſuch an influence upon our minds; if we ſet ſuch a value upon honour and reputation among them, and this accounted not the leaſt part of the reward of a righteous behaviour; then certainly it muſt be pleaſing to the mind of a virtuous perſon, to think that he is eſteemed and beloved by thoſe who are in a rank high above mortals, and it muſt be a very natural incentive to him to be and to do good. But farther, when we know that the time approaches quickly, when we ſhall exiſt in a ſtate of ſeparation from the body; when we ſhall unqueſtionably feel thoſe ſentiments concerning our preſent ſtate, which it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe thoſe pure ſpirits always have; it will at preſent appear profitable to us to think to our ſelves what theſe ſentiments are; or, which is the ſame thing, how we ſhould judge and be affected, in their rank, and their ſtate. SERM. IX.

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To come to particulars; there is nothing more certain than that goodneſs and righteouſneſs, are the greateſt glory of the intelligent and moral nature. Theſe, in their higheſt poſſible perfection, are the glory of Divinity itſelf; ſuch degrees therefore as creatures attain, and in which their Maker's reſemblance conſiſts, muſt be their higheſt excellency and glory. Hence we may be ſure that the delight of thoſe excellent unembodied ſpirits, and who are ſpotleſſly pure and good, muſt be in the righteous and holy, who are the excellent of the earth. Theſe in proportion to their attainments, they muſt eſteem and love. On the contrary, all unrighteouſneſs and vice, muſt be their utter averſion. With what friendly regard muſt they be ſuppoſed to look upon the upright perſon; with what chearfulneſs perform the ſervices and good offices towards him, which they receive in charge, as the inſtruments of divine providence in training him up, through the diſcipline of mortal life, to that ſtate in which he ſhall be more upon a level with themſelves, and their eternal companion? What pleaſure likewiſe, muſt they take in the converſion of a ſinner to the paths of truth and righteouſneſs, and in every acceſſion to the family of God? Thus our bleſſed Saviour teaches, that there is joy in the preſence of the angels of God, over one ſinner that repenteth. All the various

various steps by which men grow from the beginnings and infancy of true virtue and religion, to the maturity of it, must be pleasing in their eye; as every false step, every deviation, must be offensive and grievous. All the instances of religious and virtuous self-denial, all those conflicts between conscience and inclination, in which the former obtaineth the victory; all the eminent actions of life, in which men have distinguished themselves as friends to God and goodness, must give them pleasure and satisfaction. Virtue, unquestionably, is the only valuable distinction, in their eye; and with which no other endowment is to be compared. But this need not be enlarged on; for if these pure and good spirits are at all conversant among us, it is evident that thus they must be affected, towards the moral characters of such as fall under their observation.

But now, let us also imagine what their sentiments must be concerning other endowments, and distinctions, which men may be possessed of, who are utter strangers to true virtue, and in whom the love of God and of goodness have little or no place. What a figure doth high station, and great power and authority, make amongst mortals; what low obeisances, what marks and expressions of dependence, and subjection, do they expect from their fellow-creatures who are in their power?

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God; but now of how much ſmaller, when they ſee that in a very little time the poſſeſſors ſhall be deprived of all; and, like the pooreſt of mankind, go down to the duſt, where all diſtinction, of this ſort, is loſt for ever. And how muſt they look down upon thoſe unhappy creatures, whoſe breaſts ſwell, whoſe imaginations are intoxicated with ſuch pageantry! How ridiculous muſt the buſtling of mortals, the inceſſant labours of head and hand to obtain ſuch diſtinctions, appear in man, *who is a worm, and the ſon of man who is a worm?* SERM. IX.

Again, what can they be ſuppoſed to think of the toils of the avaritious? toils inceſſant, and which know no bounds? When men, who can need no more than food and raiment, yet have their whole hearts and active powers engaged, in adding ſum to ſum, merely for the ſake of holding and poſſeſſing, and not at all for uſe! *loading themſelves*, as the prophet ſpeaks, *with thick clay*; or, at beſt with what becomes a more dangerous idol to them, than any golden calf could be; and often proves a ſnare and curſe to their deſcendants as well as to themſelves! In acquiring, and in hoarding, the ſons of miſery labour out their days; but quite inattentive to the true purpoſes of human life, for which they were ſent into the world. Nay further, by thus *withholding more than is meet*, they ſadly violate thoſe laws of God by which all, who are poſſeſſed of abundance,

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are laid under obligations to give for the relief of ſuch as are in want. And, very probably, few there are of the ſordidly covetous who do not break through the rules of common juſtice, as well as thoſe of generoſity and compaſſion; either wronging or defrauding their neighbours as they have opportunity, or oppreſſing thoſe who are any way in their power. You bleſſed ſpirits, with what indignation muſt you be ſuppoſed to look down on human life, ſo conducted! Upon human powers and faculties, ſo proſtituted! how little ſignificant that property, and thoſe poſſeſſions, whoſe only uſe muſt terminate with the ſhort courſe of mortal life; having no relation to a man's ſtate hereafter, farther than as the good or bad uſe of them, in this world may make that ſtate happy or miſerable!

Again, to mention but one other inſtance, how muſt theſe ſuperior ſpirits look down on the character and conduct of the voluptuous, who live only or principally, for the ſake of ſenſual pleaſure; which is the divinity they ſerve, and their portion and chief good under the ſun! Nay, all men of a liberal and generous taſte, look with contempt upon this character; and, in truth, to the diſcerning, it can never appear other than infamous and contemptible. In what a light then muſt they ſee it, who are placed above the ſphere of ſenſual joy entirely? God has planted appetites in us

us ſuitable to our ſtate and circumſtances upon earth; and he hath provided proper gratifications for them. Theſe were intended not only to put men upon ſupplying the neceſſary demands of nature; but to miniſter to our delight, to ſweeten life, and render it comfortable; and all acknowledge that the gratification of natural appetite within the bounds of temperance and virtue, is perfectly innocent; not only ſo, but to enjoy the gifts of divine bounty with chearfulneſs, may be called an expreſſion of gratitude to the donor, and of our being pleaſed with his adminiſtration; whereas, when the effeminate and luxurious taſte leads men to tranſgreſs the laws of temperance; when they proſtitute and debaſe their own powers, and pollute themſelves with the groſſer vices of ſenſe, then indeed they become a reproach to the rational and moral nature; and, while they act a ſhameful part, act, at the ſame time, a ruinous one. When we conſider, how ſuch a courſe of life muſt appear to the beings above us, it muſt be attended to, that thoſe appetites which our Creator hath planted in us, however in our preſent ſtate neceſſary, yet are really marks of our imperfection and infirmity; without which they could have no place at all in our frame. Now, to make that the object of our chief attention, and our chief good, which is in its own nature a monument of our weakneſs, is

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undoubtedly to contradict nature in the moſt opprobrious manner. We are endowed with noble powers, powers enabling us to tread in the footſteps of angels, and to participate in their exerciſes and entertainments; but theſe the voluptuary neglects, reſting, as his ultimate end, in thoſe pleaſures which are common to us with the brutal kinds. What can be a prophanation of human nature, if this is not? Let us only reflect how the angelic orders muſt look down on all thoſe things which the votaries of pleaſure place their happineſs in; and what diſtreſs they would account it to be united, we may ſay, thruſt down into a body like ours! they poſſeſs much nobler powers, much more refined delights; and to them a ſtate the moſt eligible we can ſuppoſe upon earth, with reſpect to pleaſure, would be diſtreſs and ſuffering. Should we not attend to this? One cannot eaſily ſuggeſt a conſideration which more effectually tends to wean the thinking mind from all ſenſual exceſſes, than that the orders of being above us, who ſurely are much more perfect and happy than we are, not only have no dependance on ſuch pleaſures, but are probably abſolute ſtrangers to them. Here every one who believes the exiſtence and ſuperior happineſs of ſuch beings, has a demonſtration that the joys of mind are far ſuperior to thoſe of ſenſe; and when a conviction of this is thoroughly impreſſed on the heart,

heart, then will the clamours of ſenſual appe- SERM. XI.
tite be little attended to; its gratifications, now leſs eſteemed, will by degrees ceaſe to excite ſo much of our care or of our joy.

Let us now, on the other hand, imagine how a ſufferring and calamitous ſtate muſt appear in the view of theſe ſuperior beings. That they are good and friendly to mankind we are moſt certainly informed. That they have a knowledge of the diſtreſſes of mankind, there is no reaſon to doubt: But then as we cannot conceive that creatures entirely unembodied, (if that be really their caſe; which however ſome very wiſe men have greatly queſtioned) can have any ſenſe of what bodily pain is; ſo their ſympathy with us, muſt be ſomething exceedingly different from that affection in the human heart. This ſympathetic affection, to anſwer its end, muſt be ſtrong; and we know it is in ſome caſes attended with very great pain: inſomuch that the ſympathizer, were the thing poſſible, would be very glad to transfer the pain from the ſufferer to himſelf. In ſuch caſe, though it is hard to imagine that theſe pure and happy ſpirits have any ſuch pain as we feel in ſympathy, yet they may, and no doubt, do feel a tenderneſs and compaſſion ſuited to their ſtate; and ſuch as is not inconſiſtent with the undiſturbed calm of their minds.

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The ſufferings of good men for inſtance, in the cauſe of truth and virtue, muſt be matter of pleaſing contemplation to them; and ſuch ſufferers themſelves, objects of their high delight: For this is, in truth, the moſt honourable and illuſtrious light in which human nature can appear; and they well know that theſe light afflictions, which are but comparitively for a moment, work for the ſufferer a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory: So that while they compaſſionate what good men endure; yet they muſt be ſuppoſed, at the ſame time, to rejoice on their account, and to have a clearer view than men can have, of the crown of righteouſneſs which is in reſerve for virtue. So likewiſe, all good men who ſuffer in the common calamities and evils of life, while they do honour to their Maker by a meek reſignation to his will, and a confirmed patience, muſt be objects of delight to theſe good ſpirits: For ſuch excellent and happy beings, have, unqueſtionably ſuch clear conceptions of God's government; of the wiſdom, and righteouſneſs, and goodneſs of his adminiſtration, as perfectly to acquieſce in it; they muſt foreſee a moſt happy and deſireable end; ſo that whatever concern they may have for the good, who at preſent ſuffer, yet they muſt, at the ſame time, be perfectly pleaſed with the whole ſcene, and that the will of the infinitely wiſe and good parent of the univerſe, ſhould be always done.

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Such then, we may suppose are the senti- SERM. ments of those superior excellent spirits, con- IX. cerning our present state. And no man surely who shall attend to what hath been suggested on this subject, will ask, what concern we have with their sentiments concerning us, or what it can avail us to know how they are affected? For you see both from scripture, and from what we may rationally conjecture of their state, and their views of our world; that excellent hints may be taken for regulating our own conduct and affections; even with a view to the approving our temper and behaviour to them; who, we have reason to believe, are conversant among us, and much employed about our affairs.

But there is still a better reason for endeavouring to conform our sentiments to theirs; namely, that in a little time, we shall be divested of body; and rise to a state, in that respect, resembling theirs: Quite cut off from all communication with the present body; and removed far, as from all the pains, so from all the joys and pleasures of this bodily state. Most fit it is then, that we should exert our utmost care to prepare for that state, and to acquire that way of thinking, which is suitable to it. This great change which shall come to pass when we have put off this body, is to good men the object of joyful expectati-

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on; who know that they ſhall be better and happier, when they are removed from this ſcene. This they are taught in the holy ſcriptures; they have, in themſelves, the principles of that life which is truly angelical; and have, even here, foretaſtes of its joys. From the love of God, and of goodneſs; from purity of heart and life, from the pleaſing approbation of conſcience, from a perfect ſatisfaction with the meaſures of God's government, from being kindly affectionate, and from doing good; from all theſe, certain joys and pleaſures flow, far more ſubſtantial and ſolid than any thing which their external ſenſes can yield, or their outward ſtate in this world, be it as great and proſperous as can be imagined; and they know that it is better for them *to be abſent from the body, and preſent with the Lord.*

But whether men are prepared for this great change, in their ſtate, or are not; yet it will moſt aſſuredly come; and *from the warfare of death there is no diſcharge.* The time haſtens when the greatneſs and power, the pomp and ſplendor, of high life, ſhall be, to the preſent poſſeſſors of them, no more for ever; when the treaſures of the wealthy ſhall be no more to him, than if they had never exiſted; when the whole apparatus for ſenſual pleaſure, ſhall be annihilated: when men ſhall go into a ſtate quite new, and eternally ſeparated from all things

things ſenſual and earthly; then muſt they be ſenſible of, then muſt they feel the juſtneſs of thoſe ſentiments concerning this world, and its joys and ſorrows, which have been in this diſcourſe laid before you.—They muſt feel, and that will give thorough conviction, that things external and ſenſual were never intended to be the portion, and chief good, of ſuch a creature as man; they will feel that all theſe things are, in reality, vanity and vexation of ſpirit; that the children of this world, with all their pretences to wiſdom and penetration, have acted under the influence of a continued moſt groſs deluſion; now, when they find themſelves removed into a ſtate where nothing that was before their happineſs, is to be enjoyed, this conviction muſt, with irreſiſtible force, take poſſeſſion of them. Beſides, let us ſuppoſe that, with all this, they have no taſte nor reliſh for the pleaſures of a nobler kind, in which angels and the perfect ſpirits of the juſt are happy; then they muſt be in a poor and wretched ſtate indeed! But eſpecially it muſt be ſo, if they carry along with them into the world of ſpirits, ſtrong deſires after the enjoyments of this life, which are never to be gratified; and ſurely it is no irrational or unphiloſophical thing to imagine this; nay, there is conſiderable probability of it; then how deeply muſt they ſuffer! Can any thing give greater torment than ſtrong

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Serm. IX. deſires never to be gratified? what muſt become of ſuch as have made power and authority, riches and wealth, or ſenſual pleaſure and joy, their idols on earth, and continue to have as earneſt longings after them as ever, now when they are forever ſeparated from them? certainly were there no poſitive puniſhment to be inflicted on them, this itſelf muſt render them completely wretched. Thus then, we ſee that thoſe ſentiments concerning this world, and the things of this world, to which reaſon and the holy ſcriptures direct us, are ſentiments which, however they are neglected now, and that men act in direct oppoſition to them, will yet one day, force themſelves upon us, and will prevail: So that if we are not capable of the life of angels, we ſhall become very miſerable, as men.

The concluſion of the whole, is, that we ſhould by all means labour to get into, and to cultivate that temper and taſte, which is neceſſary to fit us for that ſtate into which we ſhall moſt aſſuredly go; and in which our happineſs, or miſery, ſhall undoubtedly be very great. *If we are riſen with Chriſt, let us ſeek thoſe things which are above, where Chriſt is at the Father's right hand; let us ſet our affections upon thoſe things which are above, and not on things on this earth.*—Thinking and acting as perſons who are *crucified and dead* to the world.

The greateſt, and an abſolutely neceſſary means to this end, is to imprint on the mind

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a deep conviction that the holy and divine life is the most excellent; and that in the pleasure it yields, we shall really find ourselves more happy and satisfied, than in the most exquisite provision which can be made for our entertainment in things external and sensual. This I would very much insist on, and earnestly exhort you to seek after true happiness; to choose, and pursue that good, which we on the whole, admit to be the greatest. Why then do we not all, without exception, pursue after that life and state which may indeed be called angelical? we acknowledge, in speculation, that it is the best; but with many, alas! this is all. But if men will look into their own hearts, they will find there the source of that distemper by which they are alienated from the life of God. It is a suspicion and distrust that they cannot be happy in it; that it is not substantial, and satisfactory: And surely, till this prejudice be rooted up there is no good to be done: In all our attempts in religion and virtue, we shall be like men on a journey, the end of which they hate; and so every step is irksome and against the grain. Now, one of the most familiar and obvious methods of reasoning with our own minds, upon this great point, is this; that those orders of being which are far superior to us, must be in proportion to their advancement, happier, and have a higher enjoyment of existence than we have: Yet we are sure

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that

Serm. IX. that this is independent of a bodily ſtate ſuch as ours, and of all its joys. We are alſo ſure at the ſame time, that we have thoſe powers and principles in us, which make us capable of a participation with them, in the higheſt kind of joys: muſt we not then be perfectly aſſured, that in theſe joys we ſhall find ourſelves moſt happy? That all the prejudices by which we are led to think otherwiſe, are moſt unjuſt and unnatural; that they ought as ſuch, to be renounced; and that we never can act our part well, while any ſuch wild imaginations have power over us. By them we are diverted from the ſource of our higheſt happineſs; cut off from *the fountain of living water*, and, in the prophet's language, may be ſaid *to hew out to ourſelves broken ciſterns which can hold no water*.

But eſpecially to ſerve this great end, we ought to feel it conſtantly at heart, deeply rooted there, as a principle never to be conteſted, that our higheſt happineſs does not at all depend on an embodied ſtate; let us therefore keep a ſtrict diſcipline over our appetites, of every kind, never exceeding the bounds of temperance, never indulging in any irregular or forbidden gratifications: but inſtead of theſe animal appetites, which ſhall periſh with the body, let us cultivate with the utmoſt care, all good affections, and thoſe pure pleaſures of mind, which ſhall never decay.

SERMON

SERMON X.

The cares of human life, how far they ſhall ceaſe in a future ſtate, and how this conſideration ought to regulate and moderate them at preſent.

ECCLESIAST. II. 23.

For all his days are ſorrows, and his travel grief; yea, his heart taketh not reſt in the night. This is alſo vanity.

THE principal ſubject of the formet diſcourſe wasthe angelic ſtate. Where we, in ſome meaſure, ſaw how far reaſon directs our conjectures concerning the exiſtence of orders of beings ſuperior to us; beings of a purer and more excellent nature, perhaps, wholly unembodied; and it was obſerved, that the wiſe antients of all nations had an idea of ſuch beings, and believed

SERM. X. their exiſtence. I took notice alſo of the clear and full proof of this from the holy ſcriptures, and gave a ſummary account of what they teach concerning the angelic ſtate, their orders, the vaſt numbers of them, their hiſtory, and the fall of many of them, from their original purity and innocence, into a ſtate of very great guilt and miſery. It was ſhewed likewiſe what the holy ſcriptures teach us of their being converſant in our world, and employed about its affairs; which naturally led to that which was the principal ſubject, namely, what their ſentiments might be ſuppoſed to be, concerning our preſent ſtate and affairs; concerning the moral characters of men, and their purſuits, either after virtue, which is the great aim of the good; or, after greatneſs and power, wealth and ſenſual pleaſure; in ſome or other of which men who are utterly negligent of virtuous purſuits, find, or at leaſt ſeek, their paradiſe, and ſupreme good: theſe were particularly inſiſted on; and for this reaſon, that the time will certainly come, and that very quickly too, in which we ſhall find ourſelves in a ſtate like that of angels, in this reſpect, that we ſhall be diveſted of body, and ſhall leave behind us, for ever, all ſenſual pleaſures, all our worldly poſſeſſions, all the pomp, ſplendor, and power, which upon earth are ſo dazzling;

zling; that we ſhall then be thoroughly and irreſiſtibly convinced of, for we ſhall feel the juſtneſs of thoſe ſentiments which ſuperior beings have of our preſent ſtate; that it is perfectly fit we ſhould now entertain theſe ſentiments, in which in a ſtate of ſeparation from body we ſhall certainly find ourſelves, and that this would be exceedingly profitable to us. On theſe ſubjects ſeveral reflections were made, which ſhall not now be repeated. In the mean time, that way of thinking very naturally leads the mind to another ſubject, which may be very uſefully conſidered in the ſame light; with reſpect to which alſo, we ſhall moſt certainly think the ſame way, when in a ſeparate ſtate, and become like the angels of God; the ſubject I mean, is the cares and ſolicitudes of our preſent ſtate: To theſe no man can be an utter ſtranger; and ſome men groan under a daily oppreſſion by them. *For what*, ſaith the wiſe preacher, *hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the ſun? For all his days are ſorrows, and his travel grief; yea, his heart taketh not reſt in the night. This is alſo vanity.* Of this how many thouſands have a moſt painful experience? their thoughts very much on the rack; anxiouſly ſolicitous about what may befal them hereafter; or elſe, eager in forming, in proſecuting their

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designs, and in working their way to the ends they have in view.

We ſhould the rather enter on the conſideration of this ſubject, as ſuch carefulneſs, accompanied often with a very painful anxiety, ſeems to be in a peculiar manner the portion of mankind. If we attend to the orders of life beneath us, they ſeem to be free from all ſolicitude about the future ſtages of life, about what may come to paſs to them in it, or how proviſion ſhall be made for the ſupply of their neceſſities. *Behold*, ſays our bleſſed Lord, Matt. vi. 26. *behold the fowls of the air, for they ſow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them.* They take no thought about futurity; contented with what, in the common courſe of Providence, they are furniſhed withal. It is true, ſome of the animal kinds ſeem to us, to act with great care and foreſight. Every one knows how the ant and the bee lay up in ſummer that proviſion which is neceſſary for their ſubſiſtence in winter: And we ſee how wonderfully the feathered kinds provide neſts for the hatching, and preſerving their young. However, it will, I believe, be readily granted, that all this pains of theſe ſeveral kinds of creatures, to provide future conveniencies, and againſt future want, is not owing to any forethought of future events,

or

or any deliberation and reaſoning concerning them; but to that natural inſtinct by which in the whole courſe of life, they are directed; and which, indeed, where neceſſary for their direction, works in a manner as exact and effectual, as the ſtrongeſt reaſon, and the moſt conſummate wiſdom of mankind; nay, much more ſo: but then, out of that particular tract, is of no ſort of ſervice. What this inſtinctive power is, we need not here particularly inquire: But in general, it muſt be aſcribed to their Maker, and is a directive power infuſed by him. Accordingly, the inferior animals purſue the uniform guidance of inſtinct, but of deliberation and reaſoning, or of care and ſolicitude about what ſhall come to paſs, they do not diſcover any viſible traces of it. And ſurely, as little can we imagine ſuch carefulneſs to have place in the angelic world. Pure ſpirits are above all the objects of it; above all dependance for ſubſiſtence, or enjoyment, upon any precarious events; they want no food or raiment; they have no apprehenſions of ſickneſs or diſorder; nor, therefore, any ſolicitude about the methods of preventing, or removing it. They have no fear of adverſe events; they have no families or offſpring dependent upon them, to be the objects of their concern. In a word, their ſtate, as far as we can conceive of it, is far

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above all thoſe things which to the human kind are matter of care, and painful ſolicitude: Nor can we imagine any thing which ſhould be the object of care to them, but that they may faithfully execute the commands of their ſupreme Lord, and maintain their integrity and loyalty to him; but this, one would think, ſhould be an object to them of attention, rather than of uneaſy care; eſpecially as we ſuppoſe them to be in a confirmed ſtate, and out of all danger of falling; ſuch a ſtate as the ſpirits of the juſt arrive at, who ſhall never ſin, but be for ever holy and happy. Such carefulneſs, then, ſeemeth to be peculiar to man; and that in his preſent ſtate only: nor is it unfitly a part of our conſtitution; becauſe we are endowed with a kind of a preſcience of many future events, in which we are concerned; of many exigencies which muſt be provided for; we have means put into our hands of ſupplying them, and powers given us to uſe thoſe means, under the direction of reaſon and underſtanding: theſe higher powers, therefore, not mere inſtinct, are to guide us. Now in ſuch a frame it was fit, one may ſay neceſſary, that care ſhould make a part, as an incentive to us to apply our powers in the proper manner; and that each may ſucceſsfully diſcharge that truſt of himſelf, ſo to ſpeak, in-

to which every man is committed by his Maker. In the brutal orders, inſtinct ſupplieth the place of reaſon, and of incentive too; in man, reaſon to direct him in the application of his powers, and foreſight of his wants, powers more excellent than mere inſtinct, are given to ſerve the purpoſes of life: But in aid of theſe, care and concern were ſuperadded, to excite men to the exerciſe of thoſe powers which God hath endowed them withal: And indeed, to be without all care and concern about the preſent and future ſtages of life, to live in a ſtate of utter indolence, and neglect of what may befal ourſelves and others committed to our care; is ſo far from being virtuous and commendable, that it is an exceeding bad, a moſt contemptible character: It is a character quite out of nature, moſt abſurd, and, in the preſent condition of human life, moſt hurtful and ruinous. SERM. X.

Now, in conſidering the cares of human life, which are very various and very many, after, firſt, giving a general and comprehenſive view of them, I ſhall, in the ſecond place, conſider how far they muſt be ſuppoſed to ceaſe, when men go into a ſtate of ſeparation from body, and are, in that reſpect, like the angels of God in heaven; and then, laſtly, ſhew what aſſiſtance this ſubject furniſhes for

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the direction of our preſent conduct, and the regulating of our tempers.

Firſt then, the objects of human care are very many and very various. We are here in a ſtate of diſcipline and trial; we know, both by reaſon and revelation, that our future ſtate will be according to our behaviour in this world; and *that as a man ſoweth, ſo alſo ſhall he reap*. The greateſt of all cares, then, is that of conducting life ſo as we may come to an honourable concluſion of it, and be for ever happy: but the means of attaining to this, our Maker hath moſt liberally furniſhed us with; and given us every fit opportunity of working out our own ſalvation. So that the greateſt concern we can poſſibly have in life, is how to do this ſucceſsfully; nothing elſe is worthy of being laid in the ballance with it; for, undoubtedly, things temporal are of little or no moment, when compared with things eternal: but upon this, which, as it is the moſt important, ſo is the moſt obvious of all points, I ſhall not need to enlarge.

Farther, the cares which ariſe out of our preſent ſtate are almoſt innumerable. What we ſhall eat, what we ſhall drink, and wherewithal we ſhall be cloathed, is a care which all men, more or leſs, know. Men are ſo made, and under ſuch a conſtitution, that if they are not provided for by thoſe who have gone

gone before them, they muſt owe the neceſ- SERM.
ſary ſupports of life to their own labour and X.
induſtry: Under this head likewiſe, are com-
prehended not only our cares for procuring the neceſſaries of life, but whatſoever relates to decency, and dignity in it, ſuitable to that ſtation in which Providence hath placed us; and indeed a regard to this, which is far from being blameable, nay, when kept within proper bounds, is a virtuous and praiſeworthy diſpoſition; yet ſtill it produces a great many cares, with which the mere ſubſiſtence of life hath nothing to do. Again, acting our part in life well, and ſo as the generally eſtabliſhed law of reputation requires, in order to obtain a good character, and the eſteem of the neighbourhood; is a matter of very juſt concern to an ingenuous mind. But, as there are many good things to be procured by the proper application of the powers which God hath given us; ſo, there are many evils to which we are daily expoſed, and which are the objects of fear and painful apprehenſion, to be, in like manner, avoided;---evils to which the bodily frame is ſubjected; ſuch as pains and diſorders innumerable; which every man ſhould do his utmoſt to eſcape, if they can be eſcaped; or, to remove them when they are actually incumbent; misfortunes again, which affect the outward ſtate and circumſtances,

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cumſtances, or which may hurt a perſon's character and reputation, thus interrupting his peace and enjoyment. To many ſuch evils we are all liable; and it is the province of prudence and diſcretion to foreſee, and prevent them, if they can be foreſeen, and prevented; or to remove them; at leaſt to alleviate them, if they cannot be removed.

But ſtill farther, a man's merely perſonal concern in human life, and what ſhall befal himſelf only, may be to him a very inconſiderable care, when compared to what ariſes from tenderneſs in the nearer ties of conſanguinity and friendſhip; eſpecially with reſpect to thoſe whom nature hath placed in a ſtate of dependence upon a perſon, and whoſe ſupport and well-being muſt in a great meaſure rely upon him. In this caſe, a perſon's care is multiplied by a diverſity of objects; many of whom may give him a deeper concern than any thing affecting only his own perſonal ſtate. What cares, for inſtance, are children to an ingenuous and affectionate parent? that they may happily be introduced into the world, with a fair reputation and character; that they may be reputably ſettled; and ſo alſo with reſpect to near and dear relatives, and highly eſteemed friends. Such cares are indeed many, and to the moſt affectionate, which are generally likewiſe the worthieſt

ſpirits,

ſpirits, they, I believe, often give much more pain, than any mere perſonal concern could do. Many men ſuffer much more for others, than they poſſibly could do for themſelves. And, were the thing poſſible, would transfer the burthen of thoſe others to themſelves. SERM. X.

But beſide all this, there is a public, there is a community, which, to the good and worthy, will be matter of deep concern; and, above all, there is the general cauſe of truth and virtue, which a good mind will ever feel neareſt at heart. Now, all theſe are cares which Providence has allotted to the ſons of men to be exerciſed therewith.

And, before we diſmiſs this head, let us make the following reflections upon them. It has been obſerved that ſuch care is a neceſſary part of the conſtitution of man, a neceſſary incentive to the exertion of the powers God hath given us, for the procuring of good and the avoiding of evil: And our care is certainly natural, and virtuous, when it only riſes to ſuch a degree as is neceſſary to anſwer this end: But alas! our cares are, in many caſes, unnatural, abſurd, and indeed ridiculous. Men are ſeen ſometimes to make that the object of their ſolicitous concern, which is abſolutely out of their power; and where it is impoſſible by any application of theirs,

to

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to make the leaſt alteration in the ſtate of what they are concerned about---as impoſſible, as it would be for them to alter the ordinances of heaven, or to arreſt the motion of the ſtars. Now, this is an abſurd vanity; and it is the province of true wiſdom, as much as poſſible, to prevent and check it. The truth is, what is abſolutely out of our power, ought as abſolutely to be out of our care; For, of ſuch care, we may be clearly convinced, by the leaſt attention, that there is, there can be no end, in any ſenſe of that word; becauſe its objects may be without number; and there is no good purpoſe can poſſibly be ſerved by it. Again, when our care has ſo much anxiety in it, as deſtroys our activity, and, inſtead of diſpoſing us to exert our powers for the avoidance of evil, or the procuring of good, rendereth us utterly unfit for action at all; proſtrating the powers and vigour of the mind; in ſuch caſe, it is evident that our care is only hurtful to us; and ſuch is too often the caſe: Juſt as fear, which often ariſes to ſuch a degree, that inſtead of rouzing men to repel danger, it utterly diſables them from acting at all. Againſt ſuch vain cares we ought to bend all our powers of reaſon and religion; ever conſidering them as moſt unfriendly to our peace and quiet: And ſurely, it is wiſe in us to labour as much as poſſible,

ſible, ſince they cannot procure what we wiſh, SERM.
that they may not invade our repoſe. Farther, X.
our cares are exceedingly culpable, and ſpeak indeed a bad ſtate of mind, when they bear no ſort of proportion to the real value of their objects; when things comparatively of little value, engage, perhaps, engroſs our concern, while things of much greater moment are neglected. This, in the common affairs of life, is very great indiſcretion; and cannot fail of being very hurtful: Much more, in matters of religion, it works remedileſs miſchief; it ſhews impiety and diſregard to the divine authority; while, at the ſame time, it betrays the greateſt folly and weakneſs, with reſpect to ourſelves. And yet alas! how often is this the caſe? Perſons are careful and troubled about many things, while one only, in compariſon, is needful; and that one is neglected, by a kind of infatuation. Strange, that men ſhould be thus attentive to every thing but their proper buſineſs, as reaſonable creatures, and moral agents!

Having thus given a general view of thoſe cares which are allotted to the children of men, the neceſſary attendants of human life; and having made ſome obſervations upon them; let us, in the next place, conſider how far they ſhall ceaſe, when men go into a ſtate of ſeparation from body, in this reſpect become like

SERM. X. like the angels of God in heaven. And here it is obviously the most important circumstance, that we shall then be delivered from all painful cares about our salvation. There will be no more danger of coming short of the terms of our acceptance with God; of falling by temptation, from what we have already attained; or of being betrayed into negligence of our duty. All such dangers end with our state of trial and discipline, to return no more for ever. Men then enter into a state of rest, with the perfected spirits of the just; the sure pledge of a gracious acquittal, at the great day of judgment. At the time of our removal from this world, faith shall terminate in vision; and hope, in the enjoyment of what God hath laid up for those who love him and his appearance.

Again, at death, it is plain that all our cares of which the bodily state, its wants and dangers, are the object, shall cease for ever. No more anxiety about what we shall eat, or what we shall drink, or wherewithal we shall be cloathed! No longer any trouble to maintain a dignity of station, or rank, in the world; or about preserving esteem and reputation in it! No farther concern about preserving the body from distress and danger; or delivering it from evils which are actually present! No concern then about what may come to pass in

the decline of life, in the decays of old age! And ſurely it is a pleaſing ſpeculation to think of the time when we ſhall get finally rid of all theſe vexatious things; enjoying an abſolute independence on all the circumſtances and events of mortal life! SERM. X.

But ſhall we indeed get clear of all the cares of mortal life? Can it be that men ſhall not carry with them the remembrance of the circumſtances in this life, and of their relations in it? This can hardly be ſuppoſed to be the caſe. And if they ſhall carry with them ſome of the beſt and moſt pleaſing affections of the human heart, muſt they not alſo be ſuppoſed to feel that tender regard, that anxious concern, for thoſe now left behind, which prevailed while they had a part in this preſent ſcene? Shall parents, and thoſe who have been attached to others in the cloſeſt and moſt ſacred bonds, become at once forgetful, and utterly negligent of thoſe who, through the courſe of a long life, have been moſt dear to them? Now, here, I freely own, our thoughts ſeem to be not a little embarraſſed; and to give a clear and full ſolution to ſuch queſtions, would require our knowing, with greater preciſion, the oeconomy of the world of ſpirits, than is poſſible for us while upon this earth. However, I ſhall venture to ſuggeſt a few conjectural remarks, and the

SERM. X. the rather, as they will lead us to ſome reflections, which in our preſent ſtate may be exceedingly uſeful.

In general, as to thoſe appetites and affections, merely ſuited to a bodily ſtate, and which can be of no uſe when we are out of it, it is not to be conceived that ſuch ſhall remain with us. For example, of what uſe the appetite of hunger, when no animal life remains to be taken care of by means of it? And have we not the ſame reaſon to believe, that with the bodily ſtate all appetites ſhall ceaſe, when thoſe bodily organs, the immediate cauſes of the ſenſation, are no more? May we not eaſily imagine, that our frame ſhall undergo ſuch an alteration, as that ſome of the ſocial affections, particularly ſuited to our preſent ſtate, and which had a ſtrength and ardor in them, which made them powerful and effectual incentives to promote the intereſt of our relations and friends; that ſome of theſe affections, I ſay, when the ardor of them can be of no more uſe, ſhall ceaſe to operate as they now do, and ought to do: For if this ſhould be the caſe, it would be not at all a defect; but, on the contrary, a deſirable circumſtance in our ſtate. And indeed, ſhould we ſuppoſe, that, in a ſeparate ſtate, ſome of the worthieſt and moſt beautiful affections ſhould operate as they now do, we muſt imagine

gine that ſtate a very unhappy one. That calm diſpaſſionate benevolence which is here the very likeneſs of God upon the heart, cannot be ſuppoſed, in a ſtate more perfect than this, to be diminiſhed; nay, it will no doubt gain ſtrength, as that moral perfection, to which it is eſſential, ſhall advance: But then there is no reaſon to think this will be the caſe, with reſpect to the tender affections peculiarly adapted to our preſent ſtate. And if theſe are diminiſhed, yet ſo as that nobler and more angelic affections take place, which is to be ſuppoſed, ſtill the mind will be in a better and more deſirable ſtate; now become more like the higher orders of being; or rather more like to the great Parent of all being. It may be added, that we may well ſuppoſe the attention ſo engaged to more excellent and important objects, than are in this world; that what concerns this world, if at all an object, ſhall yet, comparatively, become a very inconſiderable one. Let but a good man reflect on his own ſpirit and temper in this life, when he is thoroughly engaged in divine objects; and ſurely he will then find himſelf in the beſt and moſt deſirable ſtate: A ſtate, which, indeed, doth not extinguiſh the affections, or thoſe cares which are their neceſſary attendants; but that ſuch engagement of the ſpirit makes them ceaſe to

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SERM. X. be at preſent, painful; producing a pleaſing tranquillity, which the paſſions of humanity cannot greatly diſturb, while the mind is in that ſtate. And ſurely, much more may we ſuppoſe the mind free from all painful care, while it is *filled with all the fulneſs of God*; and when thoſe affections, here the ſources of painful care, ſhall be, on the other hand, without that force and energy which are neceſſary in this life. When moreover, all objects of temporal concern ſhall appear as nothing compared with thoſe ſpiritual and divine enjoyments which will command our utmoſt attention of ſoul. But what moſt of all deſerves to be inſiſted on is, that, in a ſeparate ſtate, a ſtate of much higher perfection than our preſent, there muſt be ſuppoſed ſuch clear views of God's government, ſuch an high ſenſe of the goodneſs and perfect wiſdom of it, as will effectually diſſipate all uneaſy cares about ſuch intereſts and perſons as were in this world dear to men; and this, even though they ſhould ſtill have a clear remembrance of them, and their circumſtances; or ever ſo full and comprehenſive a view, of what their exigencies and dangers in life, may be. The perfect government of God is a foundation of perfect tranquillity, and peace of mind; when perſons have a clear view that all things are ordered juſt as they ſhould;

that

that nothing cometh to paſs, by divine appointment, but what ought to come to paſs, and what therefore they muſt cordially acquieſce in: when they have an aſſurance of this, ſo full and ſtrong, as no prejudice, no humour can break in upon, no weakneſs of affection cloud, then will the mind reſt perfectly ſatisfied, and all painful and ſolicitous care utterly vaniſh. The univerſal Parent of all is there ſeen, (ſeen doubtleſs in another manner than on this earth) ordering the affairs of every individual of his great family, in perfect wiſdom, and righteouſneſs, and goodneſs; and what more can be deſired? So far as we can rationally conjecture, this muſt be the great reſt of the ſuperior orders, in the univerſe; their eternal ſecurity from all painful care and ſolicitude; either with reſpect to themſelves, and their perſonal concerns, or with reſpect to the general concerns of God's univerſal family. And ſurely we may well ſuppoſe that, in a ſeparate ſtate, the perfected ſpirits of the juſt ſhall enjoy the ſame kind of tranquillity, and built upon the ſame ſtable foundation; ſo that all painful care and anxiety ſhall ceaſe for ever—*There ſhall be no more death, neither ſorrow, nor crying, neither ſhall there be any more pain: For the former things are paſſed away.*

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Let us, in the laſt place, conſider what improvement may be made of what has been offered on this ſubject, for the regulating of our temper and conduct. Now, what is moſt of all to be conſidered, is, that we may hence learn how, in the beſt manner, to regulate and manage the cares of human life; whether with reſpect to ourſelves, or others. How diſtreſsful theſe often are, ſcarce any one but knows; few but have felt: And ſurely no burthen is greater, or more intolerable, than they ſometimes prove. Should men attempt to diveſt themſelves intirely of all care, they would attempt what, in our preſent ſtate, is quite againſt nature; and which, if it could be effected, would bring a perſon into a ſtate very unworthy of him; would render him uſeleſs and inſignificant in ſocial life; a ſtate indeed, which muſt ariſe from ſuch a temper and conduct as would render him utterly unworthy of the world above. But the great point is, ſo to moderate and regulate our cares as to anſwer the end for which that careſulneſs, peculiar to man, was planted in our frame; that while we and others enjoy its good fruits, we may eſcape the grievous pains which ariſe from exceſs in it. I ſpeak not now of cares which are utterly vain and fooliſh; whoſe objects are intirely out of our power; becauſe this ſort of cares ought to be entirely ſuppreſſed,

ed, as they alſo may, by the uſe of ſound reaſon; but of thoſe cares which are natural, and neceſſary in our preſent ſtate. SERM. X.

And, in the firſt place, undoubtedly plain ſenſe will direct every man, ſo far as he hath opportunity of making a choice, to chooſe that ſtation, and thoſe circumſtances in life, in which he will meet the feweſt cares, and the leaſt diſſipation or intanglement in purſuing his natural genius.

But with reſpect to thoſe cares which are unavoidable, we ſhall be beſt able to moderate them according to the hints already given on this ſubject, concerning the ſtate of angels, and ſeparated happy ſpirits of men, firſt, by ſtudiouſly engaging our hearts and affections, to the moſt excellent and divine objects. For with theſe nothing that concerneth merely our preſent ſtate, is to be compared. The apoſtle Paul ſpeaks of *counting all things as loſs, for the excellency of the knowledge of Jeſus the Lord.* He ſpeaks of *being crucified to the world, and the world to him:* He ſpeaks of the ſorrows and ſufferings of this life, as utterly *unworthy of being compared with that exceeding and eternal weight of glory, which ſhall be revealed* in the ſaints; and ſurely the very ſame thing may equally be ſaid of its joys. When men are filled with juſt ſentiments concerning the ſupreme Being; his glorious perfec-

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tions, and works; concerning his ſon Jeſus Chriſt, and the love of the Father made manifeſt in him; concerning an eternal happy ſtate, and the glory which ſhall be hereafter revealed; they will then aſſuredly be very moderate in their attachments to this life, and to all its concerns; which all, in compariſon, will appear light and trifling. Beſides, this ſtate of the mind, and attachment of the heart to divine objects, does in its own nature ſatisfy the greateſt and juſteſt of all cares, of which our ſalvation is the object: For ſuch a ſtate is naturally attended with joyful confidence toward God, and an aſſured truſt in him. The ſoul poſſeſſed of tranquillity and peace in this moſt important reſpect, will be ſecure from all tormenting care about other matters. This excellent ſpirit and temper cannot indeed be ſuppoſed, while we are in this world, to extinguiſh all care; or the affections from which it ariſeth: But then it will ſurely moderate ſuch care; ſo the heir to great wealth, who has an ample and ſure proviſion both for himſelf and thoſe who ſhall come after him, though he will not be negligent even of little matters, which are juſt objects of any concern, yet he will not be greatly affected by them; as a perſon reaſonably might, who knew no greater things; who had

had his ſupport and well-being ſuſpended on what, to the other, would be mere trifles. SERM. X.

Secondly, as a ſure defence from all the painful anxieties of care, let us keep our attention fixed on the government of God. We do not indeed ſee him, with our bodily eyes, adminiſtring the affairs of the univerſe; we do not ſee him attending to every individual creature, or individual event; but we may be as ſure of it, and that the whole world is neceſſarily governed by his providence, as we are ſure of his exiſtence. Now, this aſſured faith preſents to the mind a moſt glorious ſcene; the divine power and wiſdom; every where preſent, regulating, and directing all cauſes and events; and in a ſteady and uniform manner executing the divine counſels: We are likewiſe ſure, that all theſe counſels are perfectly wiſe, and good, and juſt. Now let but a juſt ſenſe of this be impreſſed, and abide upon the mind, and all the diſquieting impatience of care will vaniſh. Nothing can come to paſs, in this immenſe family, but what is under the direction of the all-perfect parent of it: Therefore every thing is well ordered, and will end well; and therefore his faithful ſervants, commit every thing to him; on him depending aſſuredly, and with peaceful minds; in the mean time, acting

SERM. X.

their own parts, in the beſt manner they can, and diligently doing the duty required of them. The apoſtle Paul directs us, Phil. iv. 6. *To be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and ſupplication, to make our requeſts known to God.* And the apoſtle Peter, 1ſt Epiſtle, v. 7. To *caſt all our cares upon God, for he careth for us.* It is his province to order all things; there is nothing too hard for his power; and as he careth for his ſervants, his almighty power, and ſupreme authority, will be engaged on their behalf. Their own cares are comparatively but of ſmall avail; it is very little which is in their power. *Except the Lord keep the city, the watch-man waketh in vain.* But they are ſafe, and therefore are intitled to peace and eaſe of mind, under his protection. What beſide a ſenſe of God's government, a confidence in the wiſdom and goodneſs of the univerſal parent, not to be ſhaken, can ſecure the holy angels, and the perfected ſpirits of the juſt, in ſereſe and undiſturbed happineſs? and muſt not this confidence, in proportion to its degree, have the ſame influence on the virtuous here, as on the ſaints in heaven? The ſtate, it is true, of the former, is liable to a thouſand viciſſitudes from which that of the latter is perfectly ſecure: Yet ſtill the whole plan of things is framed and fixed by divine counſel; no viciſſitude can come

come to paſs, but what is part of the original counſel; in which reſpect our ſtate, upon earth, is as really aſcertained, as the ſtate of thoſe who inhabit the world above. In God's holy government then let us reſt; to him commit ourſelves, and all our concernments, as unto a faithful Creator; who will, one day, *bring forth his ſervants to the light, and make them behold his righteouſneſs.*

SERM. X.

SERMON

SERMON XI.

That the preſent ſtate has a plain reference to a future inviſible one, unſpeakably greater and more auguſt; and that in both, the ſame glorious deſign is uniformly carried on.

2 CORIN. IV. 18.

While we look not at the things which are ſeen, but at the things which are not ſeen, for the things which are ſeen are temporal, but the things which are not ſeen are eternal.

I HAVE, in ſome paſt diſcourſes treated principally concerning the light in which the affairs of our world, and preſent ſtate, may be ſuppoſed to appear to ſuperior orders of being; and endeavoured to make ſuch reflections upon it as might be uſeful to us in the regulating of our ſentiments, and temper, and

and behaviour. As we are nearly related to Serm.
these orders of being, to the invisible world, XI.
the world of spirits; and as we know so much concerning it from reason and scripture as may be improved greatly to our present benefit; I hope it will be agreeable and useful, in this discourse to suggest some further considerations upon the subject; laying before you, in the first place, the plain reference which the present state and scene hath to another scene, which is at present invisible. Then shall proceed to shew you the reason there is to think that this invisible world or scene, is much greater, and more august, than any thing our eyes now see; and thirdly, that in both, one great design is uniformly carried on by the Parent of the universe; a design very worthy of the greatness and goodness of the Divine mind.

I am first then to shew, the plain reference which the present state and scene hath to another scene which is, at present, invisible. One of the most obvious inquiries to an intelligent rational creature reflecting upon himself, capable of surveying his own frame, and discerning his dependence on a power not his own, for the subsistence of his life, and his enjoyment of it, who sees at the same time that death is common to all his fellow creatures; and that he must expect, in his turn,

very

Serm. X. very quickly to submit to it—one of the most obvious inquiries, I say, and, at the same time, most important, is, Whether death is the entire extinction of being; or, whether it is only the dissolution of the external frame, and the separation from it of that power in him, which is the principle of sensation, of thinking, and of all voluntary action. The person who with attention pursueth this inquiry, will find very substantial reason to determine that the latter is really the case; and that death, though it dissolveth the animal frame, hath no power over the rational and moral agent which inhabited it. He will find reason to believe that this agent is an immaterial substance, which hath no necessary dependence on matter for its subsistence; that it is a simple undivided thing, and does not seem, in its nature, liable to dissolution; as is a body, consisting of an infinite number of parts, which may be separated one from another; and when he cometh farther, to survey his own moral powers, and from them deduceth the relation in which he stands to the being who made him, as the subject of a moral kingdom; and seeth that he is under a moral administration, having laws written upon his heart, which are intended to direct his conduct, and that he is to expect his reward or punishment, as he is, or is not, obedient

to

to these laws; which scheme of government he also evidently sees is not compleated in the present state of things, which must needs lead him into the expectation of a state to come,— I say, when all this is considered, it will appear to him very highly probable, that at death, he shall not cease to be. However, to us Christians this is put beyond all question, by express declarations from Almighty God. So then, at death men only change their state, and go into the world of spirits. They are no more inhabitants of this earth, but now reside in a world invisible to us; and every person that is taken from the present, is added to the numbers which are in that future world. Thus it hath been from the beginning, and will be to the end of time: It is only the infancy of our being which we spend on earth, and then are translated from it, to people the invisible world; so that the earth may be considered, (if you will pardon the expression) as a nursery for the world of spirits.

SERM. XII.

But as this sheweth plainly the reference of this present state, to another which is invisible; so that reference will farther appear, from this most grave and weighty consideration, that in the invisible state men are to be rewarded, or punished, according to the deeds they have done in the body. It has been already observed, that though we may

see

SERM. XI. see clearly that we are, in our present state, under a moral administration; yet we as evidently discern that this scheme is not, in our present state, compleated. God doth not, in all cases, interpose to reward virtue, and punish vice, in that manner which might be expected under a perfect moral administration: nay, we often see what appears to us the reverse of this: we see the wicked in a most prosperous state, while the righteous are depressed, and in most calamitous circumstances: we see the children of wisdom, the votaries of righteousness, not only suffering deeply in many instances, but we see them suffering, even for righteousness sake; nay, losing their lives in support and defence of the cause of truth, and of God. Now, these are thing not at all to be expected under a perfected moral government; and for this reason we must believe that the design is not at all finished here; but that a full and perfect retribution is to be made, to every individual, in that state and world to come, which at present is not the object of sense, but of faith. And this the New Testament every where declareth. We conclude then, that the scheme of things in this world, which our eyes behold, would be, without relation to the invisible world, a thing most imperfect and unfinished; in which we have only embrios

which

which are not at all brought into compleat form. Serm. XI.

Imagination and reflection will, upon this occaſion, lead us to innumerable things in the preſent ſyſtem, which will appear great irregularities, if not connected with that inviſible ſcenery which I have been ſpeaking of. For inſtance, one perſon is taken off by death in the very bloom of life, and in all the vigour of his powers; at a time when he is capable of the moſt pleaſing enjoyment of life. Another, who is ſo loaded and oppreſſed with diſorders, that he ſeems incapable of any enjoyment, and life really a burthen to him, yet liveth on from day to day, from year to year, when perhaps all about him, and he himſelf too, are earneſtly wiſhing for his releaſe. Again, a man of excellent abilities for ſerving his generation, and of an excellent heart, who, had his life been preſerved, might have done much good to the world around him, and have proved an invaluable bleſſing to all the neighbourhood, ſhall be taken off amidſt the tears and lamentations of his friends; while wicked and profligate creatures have their lives preſerved, as a nuiſance to all who come within their reach. Some perſons, again, who, by their capacities and endowments, natural and moral, ſeem to be fitted for the higheſt and moſt important ſtations of life,

Serm. XI. ſhall ſpend their lives in neglected obſcurity; while elevated ſtations are filled with perſons no way equal to them: and whoſe being exalted, ſerves only to make their inſufficiency conſpicuous, and greatly to hurt ſuch as are under their influence. Thus, too, we ſometimes ſee a mind formed almoſt for any ſervice that any of the ſpecies could be capable of, lodged in a body utterly incapable of ſuſtaining labour and fatigue; ſo that the richeſt endowments of mind, by being allied to ſuch a body, are in a great meaſure loſt to the world; while, on the other hand, we ſee ſtrength of body ſuited to any labour, any fatigue, but that body inhabited by a mind incapable of directing its force; ſo that this becometh too in a great meaſure uſeleſs to the world, perhaps miſchievous. And ſo with reſpect to affairs and events; how many things come to paſs which we pronounce to be moſt unfortunate; in which we can ſee much evil, but can diſcern no good ariſing from them. As in the ſtate of individuals, ſo in the ſtate of nations and kingdoms, and the various turns which the world undergoes with reſpect to them; innumerable are the things which to us appear very great irregularities; and we cannot avoid thinking them ſo, ſo far as the preſent ſcheme only lieth before us; and that if we had the adminiſtration in our own

own hands we would order them quite other- Serm. XI.
wiſe; not only ſo, but could give reaſons for ordering them otherwiſe, ſeemingly very ſatisfactory. Now what ſhould be the reaſon that he who governeth all, and to whom all cauſes and all effects are neceſſarily ſubjected, doth not order them as we would, and that from the beſt principles, were the power in our hands? The reaſon can be no other than this, that what appears to us reaſonable and expedient, does not at all appear ſo to him. There are innumerable connexions and dependecies of things, even with reſpect to our preſent ſtate, that we know nothing at all of. The whole cannot come under our view, and therefore what to us may appear extremely irregular, may in reality be good, and uſeful, and neceſſary. But eſpecially, when we attend to the inviſible ſcheme which is conſtantly carried on, to the inviſible world which we are nearly related to, and with which this world maketh one conſiſtent ſyſtem, one whole; we cannot but immediately conclude, that he who hath this whole in every part of it, preſent to him, who governs it according to an uniform deſign, and who is daily tranſlating numbers from this world into the other, hath innumerable things in his view, which do not, and cannot come into our contemplation; and therefore may ſee

SERM. XI.

events to be most expedient, which to us appear very unfortunate. So with respect to the instance mentioned, of the removal of an excellent and most useful person, from this world; while a wicked and most worthless person, is suffered to continue in it; who knows what station may be appointed for the good man, and what services he may be called to in the world of spirits? Or who knows that he is not for his own sake removed out of this world, that he may be taken from the evil to come? Or, who can tell all that may be intended by it, as an affliction and punishment to those whom he leaveth behind him? But what I principally aim at in all that has been said upon this head, is, that the invisible world and the present are so related and so connected with one another, that they make one system or whole; and that in all our speculations and reasonings concerning the work of God, and the conduct of providence, this should be constantly in our thoughts, and that we are to judge of all particular events, with proper allowances for the effects unknown to us which they may have upon our present state, but especially upon the affairs of the invisible world. And when we have done so, we cannot but find reason to acquiesce in providence, in all the measures taken by that mind which superintendeth the whole,

whole, and to whom all the connexions and dependencies of each particular part, are fully known. SERM. XI.

But, in the ſecond place, we have reaſon to think that this inviſible world, and its ſcenery, is much more auguſt and grand than all that our eyes at preſent ſee; I may ſay than imagination itſelf can graſp. The world, the univerſe which we now ſee, is, it muſt be owned, exceedingly great. The earth that we inhabit, though a vaſt bulk, yet is but a ſmall part of that ſyſtem in which it is placed. But that ſyſtem itſelf, however great and extended, what is it when compared with the other ſyſtems, one may ſay, innumerable; which are, by the Creator, diſſeminated through the immenſity of ſpace? The imagination purſuing this view of things, is moſt agreeably dilated, and finds in immenſe ſpace, where there is infinite power to create, and infinite goodneſs to give birth to being, and to worlds, no neceſſary or certain limit to creation. But whatever grandeur there may be in the appearance of the material world, we are ſure it is of ſmall account, when compared with the excellency and greatneſs of the ſpiritual and inviſible. The greateſt bulk of mere matter which can be conceived, what is it when compared with mind, with activity, with power, with freedom,

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with moral agency? Let matter be ſuppoſed not only in the greateſt quantity, but caſt into the moſt beautiful and curious forms, ſtill it is nothing when compared to mind, and the powers and affections of it. And indeed but for the ſake of mind, we cannot conceive that matter could have had any exiſtence; a thing perfectly uſeleſs unleſs occupied and inhabited by power and activity. But how excellent is mind endowed with reaſon and underſtanding, with affections and active powers! This indeed is a work of God, great and magnificent. And, that we may form juſt ſentiments concerning the greatneſs of the inviſible world, let us firſt attend to the number of inhabitants which may be ſuppoſed to be in it. What mighty numbers make one generation upon the face of this earth! all which at death are added to the people of the inviſible world! We have been taught, and have the beſt reaſon to believe, that not one of theſe is loſt to the family of God: their death upon earth is their nativity into another ſtate: and if there are ſuch vaſt numbers in one generation, how many muſt there be who have, from the beginning of this world till now, removed into the world of ſpirits! Who can conceive the multitude! But if this be the caſe with reſpect to this planet, what ſhall we think concerning the other planets in our ſyſtem? Are they without

out inhabitants, suited to them, that is em- SERM. bodied? Reason will hardly permit us to sup- XI. pose this. And if there are such embodied inhabitants succeeding one generation after another, as upon earth, how inconceivably must the numbers grow which they yield to this great invisible world! But when we allow our thoughts to carry us through all the material worlds which exist, through the immensity of space, no power of numbers which the imagination can any way take in, seemeth at all commensurate to the multitudes. The mind is lost in the computation. Still farther, how great and glorious the addition of the hosts of heaven, the angels, spirits perhaps which are pure and intirely unembodied, or at least, if allied at all to matter, to such as is of a nature unspeakably more subtile, than that which we know and carry about us? How vast may the numbers of such created intelligences be, from the lowest to the highest orders of them? How full the invisible world of such inhabitants, who can tell? If there be any proportion, or analogy, with respect to the works of God between that world and ours, which so abounds every where with life, and action, and intelligence; and if we may form any judgment in this particular, from the determination and disposition of the original infinite power to communicate

SERM. XI. being and life, the numbers muſt be unſpeakably great. Now, of ſuch numbers of excellent creatures the family of God conſiſteth; that family which is conſtantly under the ſuperintendency of the one Parent; that family, to which our world is daily adding ſuch numbers, who when they have fulfilled their courſe upon earth, become inhabitants of the inviſible world. O how aſtoniſhing a ſcene is this! How great and glorious! Eſpecially when we conſider the excellent powers communicated to theſe intelligent beings, and the dignity of their ſtation.

The powers of the human mind we partly know; that is, ſo far as they unfold themſelves in our preſent ſtate: For, there may be powers inherent in the mind, not yet unfolded; becauſe, in our preſent ſtate, there is no occaſion for the exerciſe of them: Juſt as we ſee, in the ſeveral ſtages from infancy to our arrival at maturity, there are powers diſplayed at certain ſtages, of which infancy giveth no indication. So likewiſe, at our removal from this into the inviſible world, it is not unreaſonable to ſuppoſe that powers which have been formerly latent, ſhall then diſcover themſelves, and be exerted upon their proper objects; with which objects, before their entering into the inviſible world, they had nothing to do,

do. But, I say, we know in part the powers of the human mind; that they are excellent, and matter of most delightful reflection to us: A man hath indeed a rich possession, in the possession of himself. The understanding, the imagination, with all the delicacies of it, the memory which contains such a treasure, the affections, and above all the moral powers, when they are in a right state, exhibit a frame truly great and glorious; and there is no man but must be pleased, highly pleased, with existence, when he hath possession of human nature in a right moral state. But as we know not what new powers may discover themselves in the human mind, on its removal into the invisible world, so we know not how excellent the powers may be of the superior orders of being, of the angels of God; and how the dignity of their station may rise by degrees, beyond all our comprehension? Is not this invisible world then, consisting of such numbers as no man can number, and having such life and such powers communicated to them, a scene indeed worthy of infinite wisdom, and goodness, and power? A good heart cannot but exult in it; and rejoice in the prospect of being one of these blest inhabitants. Such immensity, in which the imagination is in a manner overwhelmed and lost, giveth indeed a very high delight.

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SERM. XI. There is, it is true, a very obvious reflection, which may greatly damp this joy; which is, that we are taught in ſcripture, and reaſon leadeth us to the ſame concluſion, that many perſons in this world which is inviſible, ſhall be extremely unhappy; angels for inſtance, who have by tranſgreſſion fallen from their firſt glorious and happy ſtate; and men who have been impenitently rebellious againſt the divine authority; theſe ſhall all of them be condemned to darkneſs and woe. This is indeed a moſt moving conſideration: But that in which the mind may, and in which it muſt reſt, is this, that the matter of puniſhment, as well as reward, with reſpect to every individual, ſhall be adjuſted by the righteous Parent of the great family. And we know that there is nothing in him properly vindictive or revengeful; no delight in evil, or in the ſufferings of his creatures. No puniſhment, therefore, ſhall be inflicted, but what right demands, what moral order, and a moral adminiſtation, render fit and neceſſary; none but what even infinite goodneſs, ſhall approve; none therefore, but what by all good minds, to whom the meaſures and reaſons of the divine adminiſtration are fully known, muſt be particularly approved; none, but what muſt by ſuch as do not know the particulars of that adminiſtration,

tion, yet have a firm perſuaſion, of the unerring wiſdom and goodneſs of God, be approved in general: So that the whole family of the happy muſt be moſt affectionately acquieſcent in what the parent of all appointeth. Nor will the juſt puniſhment of the guilty detract from the happineſs of the good. SERM. XL.

Let me add further, that as theſe bleſt inhabitants of the inviſible world ſhall be poſſeſſed of ſuch excellent powers; ſo, without all queſtion, buſineſs and employment will be found for them, ſuited to thoſe powers: Heaven is indeed a reſt for the people of God; but they muſt have a mean and low opinion of it, and be very bad expoſitors of ſcripture, who ſhall imagine this reſt to ſignify a ſtate of mere indolence and inactivity; a ſtate which we all know is a contemptible one; quite unſuitable to the active powers of the human mind, and to the affections which are planted in the heart. There will no doubt be the higheſt and moſt perfect activity, in the moſt perfect ſtate: and no wiſe man can imagine that what engageth the powers ſhall not be of importance ſuitable to them. In our preſent ſtate, as there are a few comparatively important ſtations, and a few capable of great ſervices, ſo vaſt multitudes are in a manner confined to thoſe lower labours, which are neceſſary to anſwer their preſent exigencies:

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SERM. XI. Whereas it is a moſt pleaſing thought, that in the world to come, this ſhall not at all be the caſe; but that the excellent powers of the mind ſhall be employed, in a manner ſuited to the dignity of them; and that to each individual in God's family, ſuch ſtations and ſervices ſhall be appointed, as ſhall give joy and ſatisfaction of the moſt liberal kind. What man of a good ſpirit could be happy in a ſtate of mere indolence and inactivity? Or, who ſuch could be pleaſed in exertions of his powers which were trifling and inſignificant? But, in that boundleſs ſcene, infinite wiſdom will ſo ſtation the individuals, that their occupations ſhall be happineſs to them. In the mean time, the moſt liberal affections, and perfectly pure, exerciſe themſelves, towards God the Father of all, and towards their fellow creatures; while the underſtanding, and contemplative powers, ſhall be full of the moſt entertaining objects, and moſt ſubſtantial knowledge. Upon the whole, ſuch numbers of creatures, ſo excellent, ſo employed, in ſuch an unalterably happy ſtate, produce a ſcene, in which the heart of man cannot but exult! A ſcene unſpeakably more grand, and magnificent, than any thing in this world, in this viſible univerſe, however great it may appear.

The third head of diſcourſe propoſed is this, that in both worlds there is one great deſign uni-

uniformly carried on, by the parent of them, SERM. XI.
by means indeed very various; but, no doubt, the beſt adapted to that ſtate of his family in which they are uſed. When we conſider the original deſign of creation, our minds cannot fix on any thing but the communication of perfection, and happineſs, whereon they can reſt: This is the glory of God: Where a being is to himſelf all-ſufficient, in himſelf compleat, and abſolutely independent; to whoſe perfection and enjoyment nothing is to be added by any creature; we muſt ſee that no private intereſt can put him on any deſign, for he can have no ſuch intereſt to ſerve; he cannot therefore be ſuppoſed to act from any ſelfiſh view. Nor can we imagine the diſplay of his power, and perfection, in and to his intelligent creatures, with a view to their admiration, and their praiſes and applauſes, is an end which ſhould be aſcribed to God. Alas! what do men, what do angels, comparatively to what God really is, know concerning him? how inſignificant then muſt their praiſes appear, in his eye, inſignificant, I ſay, to any private purpoſe or delight of his. Nor are we ever to imagine that an infinitely perfect Being can have any dependence, for pleaſure and happineſs, on what even a man, if he hath a truly great mind, can not only, be happy without, but, upon many occaſions, deſpiſe. On the other hand, how great and

God-

Serm. XI. God-like a thing is it, to give being to such numbers of creatures, in a state so perfect and happy; to so many intelligences formed after his own image, in knowledge and active power, in rectitude and goodness! This is a work indeed worthy of infinite wisdom, and power, and benevolence. And we may be sure the original design of creation, the perfection and happiness of the beings which God hath made, is steadily and uniformly pursued, in all the works of providence; and carried on by those means which, in the various state of his creatures, are best suited to serve it. Every particular step in God's administration is subordinate to this great plan; all the events we see brought to pass, with relation to individuals, and to public communities, are parts of a design, whereof what I have now mentioned is the sum, and the thing ultimately intended. And the same hand pursueth the same intention and design, through all worlds in the universe, which, all of them, however distant from, and however unknown to one another, are yet parts or members of one whole, as such related to one another, and constantly under the superintendency of the supreme mind, which comprehendeth in one view his great work, all the parts of it, and every individual creature in it. And this glorious system, this whole of God's moral kingdom, he will conduct to all the perfection designed

signed for it, and it will subsist eternally, under his inspection, in the most glorious state. SERM. XI.

But who can express the greatness and excellency of this work? An intelligent creature, perfect in holiness, and happiness, is, next to the Creator, the highest thing which can enter into the human imagination. Then such multitudes of these as constitute the family and kingdom of God!—How must the hearts of the attentive be moved, and elevated, at the thought!

Let us, in conclusion, from what has been said on this subject, observe, how great and glorious the Parent of the universe appeareth in his works, how excellent, how amiable! That eternal infinite mind, which formed this vast design, and will in the most perfect manner, carry it into execution! It is from the invisible world, and from his moral kingdom, that we derive the highest, the most honourable ideas and sentiments, concerning God. Indeed, his visible works speak his perfections, his eternal power and God-head: The sun, and moon, and stars proclaim them: The earth and all the creatures in it: The vast ocean, and all its inhabitants. In these we see exquisite contrivance, and infinite power —A power, which sometimes manifesteth itself with a majesty which is indeed terrible; as for instance, in the raging of the troubled

ocean;

Serm. ocean; in the ſtorms, and tempeſts, and
XI. lightnings of heaven, in earthquakes, and other appearances, of that kind. Yet we likewiſe ſee, that *the tender mercies of God are over all his works*; *and that the earth is full of the goodneſs of the Lord*; full of life in the various kinds of it; and abundantly productive of what is neceſſary to ſupport it. But ſtill the mind is in another manner affected with the glory of the Lord, conſidered as the Creator and Ruler of the moral inviſible world; as an inexhauſtible fountain of ſuch being, and perfection, and bleſſedneſs, as are moſt liberally communicated in it. How innumerable his family, all deriving from him alone, whatever can contribute to make their ſtate glorious, and happy to their wiſh! Such wiſdom, ſuch power, under the conſtant influence of ſuch goodneſs, who that attends, but muſt admire, and adore, and delight in? To whom then is this Being of beings to be compared? What are the higheſt ſeraphs of heaven, in ſuch compariſon? Here is greatneſs which commandeth the higheſt veneration and eſteem; if theſe words can expreſs the ideas and ſentiments which, in truth, ſeem too big for utterance in any language of mortals. Here alſo is goodneſs which commandeth the greateſt love. How do the whole frame and ſubjects of God's moral kingdom proclaim it!

But here let us pauſe, and think with ourſelves what a hateful ſtate that human mind muſt be in, which is alienated from God, which can have no delight in him! Are not the prejudices by which men are ſo alienated, of all things the moſt abominable, the moſt reproachful to our nature, and moſt ruinous? Muſt we not, if there be the leaſt remains of ingenuouſneſs, become utterly impatient of ſuch an unnatural ſtate of mind? And as to thoſe luſts which give riſe to all ſuch prejudices, with what earneſtneſs and application ought they to be ſuppreſſed? Never, never can we act a rational or manly, a wiſe or prudent, an ingenuous and right and good part, until the love of our Maker poſſeſſeth our hearts, and 'till we are affected as we ought to be, towards the infinite greatneſs and goodneſs which gave us being! Impiety towards God is of all things the moſt abſurd and hateful; of all things the moſt pernicious. As our Saviour has declared the love of God to be the firſt and great commandment, ſo diſobedience to this command, may well be called the greateſt diſobedience; it, in truth, ſpeaketh the moſt unnatural and guilty ſtate of the mind, which can be imagined: For to ſay that infinite greatneſs, and the moſt perfect goodneſs, in conjunction, are the objects of a man's averſion, his fixed averſion, is really ſaying the moſt horrid thing poſſible

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SERM. XI. possible concerning him. How must the human mind be fallen, how miserably fallen, before it can be capable of this? What place can right and truth, ingenuity and goodness, light and order, generosity and liberality, have in that person who can say in his heart, who can wish, that there were no God? And how hateful the attempts of those blinded wretches, who would lead their fellow creatures into a persuasion that there is no such Being: and that, without any such parent, the great family is produced, supported, and governed: but enough of this, which is a matter one can never think of without great indignation.

In the second place, let what has been said concerning the invisible kingdom of God, the immensity and infinite goodness of the design which he is carrying on, reconcile us perfectly to the whole of his providence, and every step in his administration. All particular causes are in his hand, and act by his direction, throughout the whole universe; they are all in his hand as one great machine, consisting of innumerable parts, moved by one unvaried power or spring, so as to answer one great ultimate end, and to produce the intended effect. We see not the particulars; we know not the innumerable parts, and the connexions of them; but we are formed capable

ble of well diſcerning the ultimate deſign; and we know aſſuredly that every cauſe, and every effect, will, as a means, contribute towards it. We are ſure thar he who laid the foundation of this glorious living temple, will carry on the building, until, as it is expreſſed by the prophet Zechariah, ch. iv. 7. *He ſhall bring forth the head ſtone thereof with ſhoutings, crying grace, grace, unto it*; in the joyful acclamations of thouſands and ten thouſands. Now, when we have our minds thoroughly ſatisfied with the greatneſs and goodneſs of this deſign, and the ſtrongeſt aſſurances that it ſhall be ſucceſsfully executed; not only ſo, but that every ſtep in the divine adminiſtration is a means of fulfilling it--this muſt needs reconcile perfectly us to all that God doth. The truth is, when we look to the ultimate end, one cannot but be utterly aſhamed of any murmuring or diſſatisfaction, with reſpect to the neceſſary means. Sufferings and calamities in a man's perſon, in his eſtate, in the death of dear friends, and ſuch things as theſe, in a manner, vaniſh out of the imagination, when the great family of God, and his moral kingdom, are conſidered in the perfection and utmoſt glory of them. Indeed it will readily be owned, that this preſent ſcene which our eyes behold, conſidered without any relation to the inviſible world,

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SERM. XI. and to God's moral kingdom, muſt ſuggeſt to the mind ſome very great difficulties, with reſpect to the Divine intentions and adminiſtration; but when we are enabled, as we are eſpecially by revelation, to purſue the great deſign to all the perfection and completion of it, then all difficulties vaniſh; and the mind is *filled with peace and joy in believing. Let us then not look to the things which are ſeen, which are temporal, but to the things which are not ſeen, which are eternal*; in which our ſpirits will find reſt, and we ſhall be naturally filled with moſt dutiful and affectionate ſentiments, toward the Being who made us, and conſider all that he does, as perfectly right and fit.

Thirdly, we ſee from what hath been ſaid, that the whole deſign which the parent and governor of the univerſe is carrying on with reſpect to us, as the ſubjects of his moral kingdom, tendeth to fill us with the worthieſt, the moſt liberal ſentiments; and theſe we ought by all means to cultivate and encourage. What can as much open and enlarge the heart of man, as the greatneſs and goodneſs of this deſign which hath been laid before you? What can give us ſuch elevated thoughts concerning our own ſtations, as our being ſubjects of God's moral kingdom, our being members of this glorious family? Is it not high honour and happineſs to be of it? And when we conſider the

the means which have been used to accomplish the design, in our world, especially the gift of Christ to serve it, there must appear a greatness and liberality, in the grace and favour of God, which wonderfully tendeth to open and enlarge the heart. Let us attend to these great things, that our minds, if I may use the expression, may be expanded; that we may be placed above every thing little, and low, and mean. The true spirit of faith is in truth a glorious one; and where it prevaileth, will subdue and banish the spirit of this world, with all the meannesses and littlenesses of it; and all the unhallowed lusts which are in its train; so that nature shall appear, as it ought to do, in greatness of mind, in generosity and benevolence, in an heavenly temper, and meet for an inheritance in the world above.

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SERMON XII.

The infinite importance of the love of God, &c.

2 THESSAL. III. 5.

And the Lord direct your heart into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

WE have an account of the apoſtle Paul's preaching at *Theſſalonica*, in the 17th of the acts of the apoſtles; and we are told he had even in his firſt attempt, conſiderable ſucceſs. *Of the devout Greeks a great multitude believed, and of the chief Women not a few.* And though he met with fierce oppoſition from the Jews, his conſtant enemies, *who ſet all the city in an uproar* on account of his preaching the Goſpel in it; yet here the foundations were laid of a church which, in a little time, became extremely

flouriſhing, if not in numbers yet in the character of its members; and the genuine fruits of righteouſneſs and charity produced by them. And accordingly we find the apoſtle writes to them, in both the epiſtles, with very great affection, as a perſon who had the higheſt delight and ſatisfaction in them; being as he expreſſes it, his glory and his joy. And he often puts up his earneſt prayer to God for them, that they might be enabled to continue faithful to him, might be preſerved blameleſs unto the coming of Chriſt, and that they might not be moved by the many perſecutions which ſhould prove the ſtrength of their faith and integrity. In the words that I have read to you, he prays on their behalf, for what is indeed the ſum, and may be called the crown of all religion; *The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Chriſt. The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God*; or render them ſtraight, in oppoſition to all crookedneſs and perverſion, a ſtate of mind in which all muſt be found who do not love God, but are enemies to him by wicked works. This is the great obliquity of human nature, and the effect of violence done to conſcience; and when nature is delivered from this, and reſtored to its proper ſtate, then the love of God will not only poſſeſs it, but prove the moſt powerful of all SERM. XII.

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principles. *And into the patient waiting for Chriſt*; the literal tranſlation of the Greek is, *into the patience of Chriſt*; that patience of which he hath ſet us ſo glorious a pattern, in his own ſufferings; and which is neceſſary to all Chriſtians, eſpecially in times of perſecution, that after they have done the will of God, they may inherit the promiſes. Our tranſlators have taken the expreſſion in another ſenſe, as ſignifying a patient expectation of Chriſt's coming to deliver his ſervants from all ſuffering, and to crown them with eternal glory: But this difference is of no great moment: At Chriſt's coming the work of patience will be perfected; 'till then the patience of his ſervants muſt be exerciſed: The ſtrength and perſeverance of it is one of the richeſt ornaments of their character; and as the apoſtle James expreſſeth it, rendereth men *perfect and entire wanting nothing*. The apoſtle prays that the Theſſalonians may be diſtinguiſhed by this virtue, and that there might be no impatience in their expectation of that great event, which ſhould for ever put an end to all their trials.

The ſubjects of my diſcourſe on theſe words ſhall be theſe; firſt, I ſhall ſhew the great importance of what the apoſtle prays for on behalf of the Theſſalonians; that their hearts might be directed into the love of God, and the

the patient waiting for Chriſt, or, into the patience of Chriſt. Secondly, ſhew that this was a proper matter of requeſt to God, as who can direct the hearts of his ſervants into his love; and thirdly, I ſhall conclude with a few inferences. SERM. XII.

Firſt, I am to ſhew the great importance of that which the apoſtle prays for, on behalf of the Theſſalonians, namely, that their hearts may be directed into the love of God, and into the patience of Chriſt.

What the love of God is, may (like all other affections of the mind) be better known by feeling and experience, than by any definition or explanation. But in general, we know how our minds are affected with the contemplation of what is beautiful; and we cannot, if we attend to it, but know, that there is a beauty and excellence of the moral kind, which is as real, and which as naturally raiſes an affection in the heart, as the beauty of ſenſible and corporeal objects does. To this affection we likewiſe give the name of love, though it is in kind different from that of which any ſenſible form, which our eyes behold, is the object. Every man muſt be ſenſible of a beauty and lovelineſs in purity of heart, in generoſity, and cordial good-will, in fidelity, and in ſimplicity of ſpirit, which moſt powerfully engageth the heart, much

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more ſo than the charms of any object whatſoever that is corporeal and viſible. We find that nature determines us to eſteem and love the characters of moral agents, with whom we are converſant, in proportion as they are leſs or more poſſeſſed of theſe graces; and where they are in the moſt eminent degree, as the greateſt love is due to the character, ſo a perſon who does not love it, and is not affected by a ſenſe of any beauty in it, may be very juſtly accounted to be in a moſt unnatural ſtate. Now we know that in our Maker all moral excellencies are combined, and in their higheſt perfection: Purity and holineſs which are abſolutely unſuſceptible of any the leaſt moral ſtain: For *God is light and in him is no darkneſs at all.* In him likewiſe is the moſt perfect wiſdom; by which he is invariably determined to purſue the worthieſt and beſt ends, by the moſt proper and effectual means. In him is infinite goodneſs and liberality; he communicates to all; he receives from none. He is unchangeably faithful and true; *from everlaſting to everlaſting God, without any variableneſs or ſhadow of turning*; there is nothing in him unſteady and capricious, ſtill the ſame, infinitely perfect, and holy, and good Being, ever acting by the ſame rules and meaſures, and for the ſame glorious ends. This Being then, whoſe glory we are made capable

capable of diſcerning, juſtly claims our high- SERM.
eſt veneration and love. Theſe would be due XII.
to him by his intelligent moral creatures, on account of his infinite excellency, even ſuppoſing we ſtood in no ſuch relation to him, as in fact we do; had no dependence upon him, and were not under any obligations to him for favours received. But it is quite otherwiſe; this glorious Being is the parent of our ſpirits, of the univerſe, and of all good. He is moſt nearly related to us, for *in him we live, and move, and have our being*. Now, you cannot but know that an excellent and amiable character, though in an utter ſtranger, engageth the heart; and in a right ſtate of the mind, excites love in proportion to the apparent excellency of it. But ſuch excellency of character in a father is the object of a very peculiar affection. There is ſomething in filial affection different from love in general, ſomething peculiarly delicate, and which is attended with, not a painful, but a pleaſing reverence and fear of offending; this is abſolutely eſſential to a good character in a child; and to be without it is juſtly accounted monſtrous. But I would particularly obſerve, that as this great parent of the whole moral family, is continually conferring on his children the moſt valuable favours, and is intending, and carrying on their perfection and happineſs, by all

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the methods of his providence, and the whole of his adminiſtration; ſo this, in well diſpoſed minds, muſt beget the higheſt gratitude; an affection in its nature different from love, but which greatly tends to ſtrengthen it; and more and more to engage the ſpirit to the glorious object. Chriſtians eſpecially, one would think, ſhould know the ſtrength of this affection above all others; to whom God has been made manifeſt in Jeſus Chriſt; in whom and the kingdom of grace adminiſtered by him, the Divine excellency and glory ſhines forth, in the ſtrongeſt and moſt engaging light.

I need ſcarcely obſerve to you, that the love of God as a principle in the heart, muſt be ſuppoſed to produce thoſe effects, with reſpect to the temper and behaviour, which all love, to perſons and moral characters, in proportion to the degree of it; neceſſarily does produce; ſuch as delight in the object, in meditating upon, and converſing with it; a diſpoſition to conduct life ſo as that it may be pleaſing to the perſon beloved, and that the affection may be mutual; the deſire alſo of approbation is a neceſſary attendant of love; a readineſs again, to ſerve the intereſt of the perſon beloved, and to oblige in all things, even at any poſſible expence to ones ſelf. Accordingly, in ſuch things as theſe the love of God will moſt certainly diſcover itſelf.

itſelf. God, indeed, cannot be ſaid to have any intereſt of his own, which we can ſerve. We cannot be profitable to him, as a man may be to his neighbour; but we may be capable, in ſome meaſure, of ſerving his cauſe in the world; of being inſtrumental in carrying on his glorious deſigns, and in doing good to others. All which are proper expreſſions of the love of God; eſpecially our loving and doing good, as we have opportunity, to our brethren; without which the apoſtle John hath taught us, that all our profeſſions of love to God, are hypocritical and vain. In a word, love to God, ſincere and prevailing, produces a conformity to his will in all things; and for this reaſon the apoſtle juſt mentioned obſerves, very truly, *that this is the love of God that we keep his commandments*; the truth is indeed not in us, if we ſay we love God, and do not keep his commandments. SERM. XII.

But I did not mean to enlarge upon this head; let us then, having taken a general view of this affection of ſoul, conſider the great importance of it, to which the fervent prayer of the apoſtle, in behalf of his beloved *Theſſalonians*, does naturally direct our thoughts—*The lord direct your hearts into the love of God.* Our bleſſed Saviour, who knew human nature, and religion, in the moſt perfect manner, teacheth that the *love of God is*

the

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the firſt and greateſt commandment. And the more particularly we view this ſubject, we ſhall be the more convinced of the juſtneſs of this; and be the more ſatisfied of the abſolute abſurdity of leaving out, in a great meaſure, this affection of ſoul toward our Maker, I ſay, in a great meaſure, leaving it out of a good character, or aſcribing very little to it; as if a man could be a good man, a good member of ſociety, a worthy or a happy man without regard and reverence, without love to his Maker.

To illuſtrate this matter, it is indeed almoſt perplexity where to begin. Muſt we not be all moſt thoroughly convinced that the love of our Maker is, in itſelf conſidered, as the nobleſt, ſo the moſt natural affection of the ſoul? what more worthy, what is there to which our nature does more determine us, than to eſteem and love what is confeſſedly excellent and lovely? How demonſtrative of a moſt depraved ſtate of mind, not to do ſo; to treat eminent excellence, and a moſt lovely character, with neglect, much more with any expreſſions of diſregard and contempt, or any thing which may be an abuſe of it? This always will be accounted diſingenuous and baſe; and from the character of which it is a part very little good is to be expected. But how unſpeakably does our indignation at this baſeneſs

neſs of character riſe, when it is conſidered, that a perſon made capable of diſcerning his glory, diſregards that Being in whom all poſſible excellencies, in the higheſt perfection, are eternally combined! in whom every thing venerable and lovely is ſummed up---That being to whom he owes his exiſtence, his parent, his conſtant benefactor, ever preſent with him, ever diſplaying his glory and his godneſs before him, and upon whom he is ſolely and abſolutely dependent! Not to love a good and kind and tender parent, upon earth, is moſt unnatural: to uſe any ſuch ill, moſt inexcuſable; but ſuch conduct towards the Godwho made us, *in whoſe hand our breath is, and whoſe are all our ways*, is ſomething which language wants words to expreſs. Imagine that original power which gave birth to the univerſe, that original greatneſs and majeſty, in all the glory of it, were viſible to our bodily eyes, and as ſenſible to us as any external object; what deep reverence, what awe, would it not command from every creature? what admiration, what love in every rightly diſpoſed mind? And what though this majeſty and excellence are not, cannot be viſibly diſplayed to us, yet ſurely, they are to the eye of reaſon, moſt obvious; though it is little of God we can now comprehend, yet we can

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diſcern

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discern enough to fill us with the utmost possible admiration, and with the highest delight. And if there be little or nothing of this kind found in us, it is not owing to want of natural capacity, but to want of taste, and to depravity of heart; a depravity which indeed makes an essential defect; a defect by which nature is stripped of that which may well be called its highest excellence and glory. Besides, what is the love of God in reality, but the love of perfect righteousness and purity, of perfect goodness and holiness, in conjunction with unerring wisdom and almighty power? Can we then suppose that a person really loveth these characters, and is possessed of them in any degree, and yet shall not love that Being in whom they are, in the highest possible perfection? Is not the inference much more natural, that if a man does not love God, he does not in his heart love righteousness and purity; in other words, cannot at all be a worthy and good man? These things ought to be deeply considered, especially by those who are favoured with the clearest displays of the Divine glory and perfection; and who are not involved in that miserable darkness and perplexity about these matters, into which the heathen world was sunk. We know the God we are called to serve, and know that he is altogether excellent and lovely.

Again

Again, if we conſider the influence of this great and firſt principle, upon the moral character, the importance of it will appear in the ſtrongeſt light. All will acknowledge that love has a powerful influence in aſſimilating to the beloved character. See how, in a manner inſenſibly, we contract the taſte and way, and even get into the language and geſtures, of perſons with whom we are much converſant, and whom we highy eſteem and love. This never fails of being, in ſome meaſure, the caſe: And ſo it will be, moſt aſſuredly, with the love of God: this alſo will be attended with an imitation of his perfections, and a conformity of temper to his will; and this in all things; ſo that it will beget that integrity or intireneſs of character, which is eſſential to a good one, and the real glory of it. This bleſſed principle, in proportion as it prevails, will make men approve and love what God approves and loves; it will make men hate what he hateth, whatever is offenſive in his eye: it will effectually ſuppreſs evil inclinations, and ſo will be the beſt preſervative from temptation, deſtroying that in which all its force lieth. The prevailing of this principle, in a word, will make the whole man like God; and the life, a nimitation of him. SERM. XII.

Again, let it be conſidered how readily our active powers are employed, in behalf of thoſe who

SERM. XI. who have poſſeſſion of our hearts: It is real pleaſure and delight to do them ſervice. In labours of this kind, the toilſome and irkſome are never mentioned; nay men will riſque very great and imminent danger, will bear very great ſuffering, for ſuch as are dear to them; nor is it at all romantic to ſay, that this affection of the heart will make perſons capable of what no conſideration of their own intereſt, no merely perſonal concern, could have engaged and determined them to. Juſt ſo, the love of God, reigning in the ſoul, will prepare men with great readineſs to perform their duty to him; and reconcile them to any ſervice however expenſive it may be, and however attended with ſuffering, which may be required of them. Can it be imagined that a perſon who truly loves his Maker will account the offices of piety a burthen? Will the worſhip of God be conſidered as a laborious taſk, or will he account it wearineſs? Will the mere pains there is in any ſervice, make him turn his back upon it? Whatever good is put into the power of his hand, whatever kind offices he can do to his fellow-creatures, will he not do them with joy, when he does them for the ſake of God, and with this particular view? Have we not all, at leaſt heard, in many inſtances, that the love of God hath prevailed over the love of

temporal poſſeſſions, and of life itſelf; ſo that for the honour of his name, and the ſupport and defence of his cauſe, his ſervants have ſubmitted to any ſuffering, with great chearfulneſs, and even diſcovered a promptneſs to it? So will the love of God, where it does in truth prevail, hallow all to the purpoſes of his glory. SERM. XII.

And ſurely thoſe ſervices and ſufferings which are performed and ſubmitted to from a principle of love, will be acceptable; they will ſpring from the heart, they will be ſincere. No hypocritical ſentiments, no corrupt biaſs, or ſiniſter view, can have any place, where the love of God is in any eminent degree. The inmoſt ſoul, in that caſe, will rejoice in lying open to the Divine eye; and can well approve itſelf to him who ſearcheth the heart: Such conſciouſneſs to the inward reigning principle, cannot but beget confidence towards God. There will be no fear, no ſlaviſh fear, in ſuch love; for as the apoſtle John hath taught us, ch. 4. 18. *Perfect love caſteth out fear; he that feareth is not made perfect in love.* And it may be added, under this head, that the exerciſe of the love of God will be naturally attended with ſerenity and compoſure of mind; and with the beſt uſe of all its powers. It is alſo the moſt effectual preſervative, when in lively exerciſe, from that

SERM. XII. gloom and melancholy which enfeebleth the powers, rendereth men indiſpoſed and unfit for action. It will produce the moſt ſolid joy and ſatisfaction; and caſt a pleaſing light upon every thing. It is reſt and refreſhment of the higheſt kind, to the ſpirit. Never will any man be capable of acting his part ſo well, as when his mind is in the beſt ſtate, in this reſpect.

Farther, let it be conſidered how the love of God will tend to reconcile the mind to the various calamities of life. And here, it muſt produce a moſt affectionate reſignation to his will, and ſubmiſſion to his providence. So the affectionate child ſubmits to the will of a wiſe faithful and tender parent, without aſking any queſtions; as he knows that all will be wiſely and well ordered, ſo he is ſenſible of a veneration for ſuch a parent, which gives additional firmneſs in ſubmitting to what is appointed for him: Thus when believers in God, and who love him, ſee his hand in every thing, they can in truth account nothing wrong: All muſt be well which he appoints, and all acceptable becauſe he doth appoint it.

Let it be added, in the laſt place, that as the love of God is that which, as has been already ſaid, giveth confidence towards him, and caſteth out all fear; ſo, according to the moral conſtitution we are under, it is the ſource of

of our higheſt happineſs, the immediate ſource of it. This is in very ſtrong terms inſiſted on, and much inculcated, by one of the moſt celebrated of the antients; whoſe main principles relating to morality may be reduced to theſe particulars, that vice is, wherever it prevails, the diſtemper and ſickneſs of the mind; that virtue is its real health and ſtrength; and that the love of God is the fountain head of the higheſt enjoyment and happineſs. And as this was the language of nature, ſo it is juſt the language of the holy ſcriptures. Could there be, at all, a heaven without the love of God? Could men delight in him without it? Could they have any reliſh of that which is the higheſt happineſs of the ſervants of God, that is, the viſion of him, without love to him? Could men without this be approved of their own hearts? On the other hand, where love is perfected, there will be perfected delight; for in proportion to the degree of love, muſt the pleaſure taſted in the fruition of the object always be. And as the love of God reigning in the heart, ſpeaks the moral powers to be in the beſt and moſt healthful ſtate, ſo, while that bleſſed affection makes men capable of the full enjoyment of God, the original infinite excellency, it alſo makes the reflecting mind pleaſed with itſelf, and abſolutely ſecures internal peace, ſerenity, and

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joy. The importance therefore of that bleſſed affection, both to the moral character and the enjoyment of being, is evident. As, on the other hand, if we ſhall ſuppoſe the heart of man deſtitute of it, what is there elſe left which can make him reputable and happy? But eſpecially with reſpect to the profeſſors of religion who have not the love of God in them, is it not plain that all their religion is utterly vain? The very ſoul and ſpirit of it is wanting. What though men make long prayers; be they ever ſo exact in the ceremonial and ritual part, yet all this kind of ſacrifice is abomination to that God, whom they cannot heartily love. And, in a word, if this bleſſed affection is not the great animating principle, men, however they may appear, are, to all the intents and purpoſes of the ſpiritual life, in a ſtate of death, and muſt fall intirely ſhort of their proper happineſs.

I have the rather, and the longer, inſiſted on this ſubject, that I am apprehenſive it is too little, generally ſpeaking, attended to. As to the principles laid down in this diſcourſe, they cannot well be doubted, nor conteſted by any man; and yet many men do not at all ſeem to act under the power and influence of them. Did that one affection, which has been the ſubject of this diſcourſe, prevail as it ought, we have ſeen what ſignal effects it

must produce: But these are far from appearing in life, as one would wish them; especially with respect to the ordinances of religion, and the exercises of piety: Zeal in these is greatly wanting; and by many they are quite neglected. There seems to be little taste for those entertainments of the mind, which result from the exercises of piety and devotion; and that communion and fellowship with God, of which our fathers spoke so much, is little heard of, little known. I am far from meaning to recommend an enthusiastic spirit, or religious phrenzy, or those extatic flights of mind and raptures which are without foundation; and to which some are seen to pretend, who are, in truth and reality, very worthless characters. I am only recommending that love of God, which is consistent with the most perfect soundness of mind; and which indeed naturally results from the sober and right exercise of our rational and moral powers; only recommending the highest possible esteem of, and regard to, the greatest possible excellence in that Being who is the father of our spirits, and in whom we live and have our being. And surely this is a debt to him, which the very first rudiments of reason and morality will teach us to pay. Our relation to him is as real, and to reason

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as evident, as our relation to any earthly parent can be. We know no object of our esteem and love which is to be compared to him, for excellence; there is not, there cannot be, any character compared to him for goodness; or to whom we are under such obligation. And, as hath been already said, not to love God, must shew the most unnatural depravity of mind. Besides, in such a state it will be found that, instead of good, many bad affections have possession of the heart. Let us ever remember the words of our Saviour, *That to love the Lord with all the heart, and mind, and strength is the first, and great commandment of the law*; and, as such, attend to the obedience of it; casting out with great care, every vile, and impure affection, as utterly inconsistent with the love of God; and cultivating this blessed temper, which as it is in itself excellent and right, so will prove a fruitful source of every thing worthy and happy in life.

The next thing the apostle prays for, is, that the hearts of the *Thessalonians* may be *directed into the patience of Christ*; a patient submission to those troubles and persecutions they were liable to, on account of the christian profession, till Christ should come for their final deliverance. Christians, in those days, had especially need of patience; they were

liable to the moſt grievous ſufferings; from which their integrity was ſo far from being a ſecurity, that it was the thing which brought thoſe ſufferings upon them. But if their hearts were happily directed into the love of God, this would have a moſt happy influence in making them patient, under all the tribulation to which they were obnoxious. Patience of ſuffering under the hand of God, is indeed the natural attendant of love to him; that love which makes a man, and all that he hath, ſacred to the purpoſes of his glory; that love, which will take pleaſure in ſerving thoſe purpoſes, in whatever manner God pleaſes; that love, which implies in it an affectionate and moſt pleaſing ſenſe, that, under the Divine adminiſtration, it will be always well with the good and upright; and ſuch a firm dependence upon Divine goodneſs and veracity, as no temporal event, nor any the moſt threatning external appearances of things, can ſhake; ſuch love will beget not only patience, but even joy in ſuffering for the ſake of God, and to preſerve a good conſcience towards him. And, no doubt, it was to the ſtrength of this holy affection principally owing, that ſo many of the ſervants of God, in all ages, have been ſeen to triumph over all the ſufferings, which the enemies of their cauſe could inflict upon them; which might have convinced them,

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I ſhall conclude with a few words upon the laſt ſubject mention'd, namely, that this was a proper matter of addreſs and prayer to God. *The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Chriſt*. The propriety of ſuch prayers reſts upon the power of the influence of the good Spirit of God, on the hearts and conſciences of men; and that God can, and is moſt graciouſly diſpoſed to give his ſervants aſſiſtance, in their labours after

after moral perfection; and in ſerving the great purpoſes of their being. This is indeed the language of nature; and it is that on which the greateſt and wiſeſt among the antients laid great ſtreſs. It is alſo every where in the Holy Scriptures inculcated; as I hope is well known to you; nor ſhall I now inſiſt upon the illuſtration of it. But the uſe to be made of it is plainly this; if men, through long negligence of God, through the prevalence of evil affections, or of bad habits which they have contracted, are likely, when they reflect ſeriouſly upon themſelves, and come to form reſolutions of newneſs of life, to meet with pain and trouble in the diſcipline of the heart, and in their labours to correct the obliquity of it; then the ſtrong expreſſions we have in Scripture of the Divine countenance and aid, muſt be a very great encouragement to them, and engage them with chearfulneſs in that diſcipline, by which ſuch obliquity of the heart is corrected, and by which it is directed into the love of God. Our own endeavours are neceſſary, and they are commanded; and to repreſent the ſtate of the mind as wholly impotent, and incapable of all endeavours, till it is, by an irreſiſtible power applied, made capable of them, is a very great error; an error which has proved to many a very great ſnare. The Holy Scriptures have taught us another lan-

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language; and have preſſed it upon us, as our indiſpenſable duty, *to work out our own ſalvation with fear and trembling*; at the ſame time encouraging us with the declaration, that *God worketh in his ſervants to will and to do of his good pleaſure*. By this we are to hold faſt doing our own duty with ſincerity and diligence, and humbly depending upon him for ſucceſs, *who fulfilleth* in his ſervants *the good pleaſure of his goodneſs, and the work of faith with power*: Bleſſed are they who thus labour, and perſevere in it! They will undoubtedly attain to that ſtate of mind, in which the love of God is perfected; and which will richly reward the pains they have taken in the internal diſcipline of the heart, as being indeed the glory of nature, and from which the higheſt and moſt compleat enjoyment can never be ſeparated: For ſo is the unchangeable will of God; and ſuch is the unalterable moral conſtitution we are under.

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The great importance of not being enſlaved by any deſire.

1 CORINTH. VI. 12.

All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

WHEN we look into the conſtitution of human nature, we find that our Maker has endowed us with a very great variety of appetites and deſires; and has provided objects of gratification ſuited to them; ſome, which are common to us with the various orders of the brutal world; others again which are peculiar to us, and ſuited to our make as intelligent and moral agents. But when

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when we look through the various desires which are planted in us, and the enjoyments provided for us (with which it has pleased the Creator to enrich human life) we find a great difference among them, with respect to their value and importance in life. Some things, for instance, are absolutely necessary to the support of life; others are only desirable as conveniencies, and comforts in it; without which we might very well subsist, and even have a pleasing enjoyment of ourselves; for a very little will suffice the exigencies of nature, if we can be only contented. Again, when we consider ourselves as intelligent and moral agents, and who are made for happiness far higher than that of mere animal nature, in which the brutal orders are partakers with us; it will be apparent, that what solely concerns animal life, being the lowest kind of our enjoyment, is not by any means, so much to be considered, or sought after, as that which gratifies the nobler affections of the mind; and promotes that excellent state of moral perfection, at which we are to aim as the highest thing we are capable of attaining; and in which, in truth, we have fellowship with the orders of being above us. All this is obvious, and needs not to be enlarged on.

But, then, as there is a difference in our desires and affections, and the various objects of them,

them, with reſpect to their importance in human life; and this we are made capable of diſcerning, or, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, of *approving things which are excellent*; ſo, we find nature endowed with a power of regulating the affections and deſires, and, in conſequence of this, our purſuits; according to the judgments, the cool and deliberate judgments, which we form of the value and importance of the things before us, and which are the objects of our deſire. We are capable of reſtraining our deſires upon particular occaſions; and denying ourſelves thoſe gratifications to which they urge us. Not only ſo, but by reaſoning with ourſelves, and the various methods of ſelf diſcipline and government, we may ſubdue the irregular force of particular paſſions and deſires; and encourage, and ſtrengthen others, which may have been too weak and languid: of this every man, who has at all applied himſelf to the diſcipline of the heart, muſt be ſenſible; and this power which we have over our own deſires and paſſions, is a moſt ſignificant and conſiderable part of our frame: for by this it is, that we are enabled to preſerve that proportion of our powers, and appetites, to one another, in which the great beauty and perfection of human nature conſiſts; and which is alſo neceſſary to the happineſs of it. SERM. XIII.

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It is plain that ſome of our deſires can never be too ſtrong, that is, the deſires of thoſe great objects, which are deſired for themſelves only, and cannot be referred to any higher end; ſuch as that of virtue and moral perfection in ourſelves, and the happineſs of the Creation of God. Who ever found reaſon to complain that his love of virtue and of perfection, was too ſtrong? Or who was ever ſelf-condemned for the greateſt imaginable good-will and benevolence to others, provided it was properly directed? In ſuch affections, we are in no danger of exceeding; which we manifeſtly are, in many of the ſubordinate affections, particularly to the things of this world, whether ſenſual pleaſure, or thoſe things which gratify ambition, or the deſire of riches. For it is often ſeen that ſome one deſire, to ſome or other of theſe objects, reigns through the whole life, does miſerably enſlave men, keeping the mind conſtantly out of order, and in a diſtempered ſtate; nor, in truth, is there any thing to be more guarded againſt, than ſuch intemperance and exceſs of deſire.

It was a noble reſolution of the Apoſtle Paul, *that he would not be brought under the power of any thing*; any thing, of that kind by which weak and corrupted minds are enſlaved; any thing, by which he might be led to what was ſinful; or, though not directly unlawful,

unlawful, yet unexpedient. *All things*, ſaith he, *are lawful to me, but all things are not expedient*: An expreſſion which he often uſes, with reſpect to his liberty as a chriſtian. All things are lawful for me, which are lawful for any other perſon; but all things are not expedient, or profitable; that is, to the purpoſes of edification, which he had always principally in view. And therefore he would abridge his liberty, and reſtrain his deſires, even as to things lawful; whenever his gratifying them would be injurious to a nobler intereſt. *All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power*, or made a ſlave to any thing. I will, as if he had ſaid, ſo moderate and reſtrain my deſires, even in things lawful, as if that they are not neceſſary, I ſhall be able to reſt contented, and to enjoy myſelf without them: I will keep my mind, by ſelf diſcipline, in ſuch a ſtate that I may call myſelf free, morally free; a thing ſurely much more deſirable than any pleaſure which a man, in an undiſciplined ſtate, can enjoy from any object, or in the gratification of any deſire whatſoever, by which he is enſlaved. SERM. XIII.

More needs not be ſaid to explain the true meaning of the Apoſtle's reſolution. I ſhall therefore proceed to illuſtrate the wiſdom and dignity of it: and its exceeding uſefulneſs in human life.

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And in the firſt place, every man who has any taſte in matters of morality, and can *approve the things which are excellent*, muſt be ſenſible, that in ſuch a ſtate of freedom and independency, there is ſomething truly honourable and great. For a man to be ſo much maſter of himſelf, and his own deſires, that though he can reliſh the various pleaſures and comforts of life, which by the bountiful Creator are liberally conferred on us, however, perhaps, not at all neceſſary, either to the ſubſiſtence of life, or to anſwer the true ends of it; though I ſay, he can reliſh theſe pleaſures as well as any other man, yet he can alſo be ſatisfied without them. No man can calmly ſurvey ſuch a character without approbation and eſteem. And ſuch only are the perſons who maintain inward freedom. For a man to be ſo under the power of any paſſion that he can have no enjoyment but in the gratification of it; (I ſpeak now of paſſions of the ſubordinate kind and which are the proper ſubjects of virtuous diſcipline) to be ſo under the power of it, that he will gratify paſſion at any expence to himſelf, or to others; to be ſo dragged by it, to uſe the expreſſion of Solomon, *as an ox to the ſlaughter, or a fool to the correction of the ſtocks*; this is an indignity to human nature, and makes a moſt contemptible character. *He that has no rule over his*

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own ſpirit, as the wiſe man but now mentioned ſpeaks, *is like a city broken down and without walls*; he is not only in a ſtate defenceleſs and dangerous; but, which is all diſagreeable ruin and confuſion. The beauty and excellency of human nature is loſt in ſuch a man; the great and honourable are no more. No ſlavery ſo compleat, ſo hateful as this; or which gives a man a meaner appearance. The excellent powers and faculties of the mind; the noble and generous affections originally planted in the heart, all ſubjected to one paltry luſt or paſſion, and, which is generally the caſe, rendered uſeleſs by it! And it is uſually ſeen, that ſuch paſſions betray men into the meaneſt and moſt unworthy actions; their honour, perhaps in the tendereſt points, ſacrificed to this idol paſſion, their friends, their country, the public! Nay, though men have a ſenſe of what is due to all theſe, and know what they ought to do, and condemn themſelves poſſibly to feel bitter remorſe; yet they loſe all power to reſiſt the imperious tyrant which reigns within; and, upon the ruins of every thing liberal and ingenuous, his arbitrary rule muſt be maintained. No liberal mind but muſt look upon ſuch characters with contempt! In what a different light does that man appear, who is really free within? in whom the inferior and ſubordinate

SERM. XIII. passions are subjected to reason and conscience; to those nobler desires and affections, which are intended to be supreme in the mind! The man who knows how to do justice to himself, the man whose honour, whose friend, whose country, never lay at the mercy of any lust of his; never suffered by his ambition, his covetousness, or his passion for pleasure! Not only so, but who has raised himself to such a state, that when he is deprived of the things which he desires, and of which perhaps he has a high relish; can still be easy and happy without them! The man, who is constant and true to himself, who is what he ought to be, to himself, and to the public; though cut off from a thousand things which were pleasing; who can enjoy them, and can refrain from them; still, in all events, the same man! This is truly most honourable. And sure, in such dignity of sentiment, in such a state of mind, there is nothing at all romantic, or out of nature; for it has its foundation in reason and nature; it is perfectly agreeable to good sense and wisdom. This will appear evidently, if we consider that a man has just cause to be easy and satisfied, when those great ends of life are answered, and those enjoyments in it preserved, which are incomparably the noblest; and have no connection with, or dependence upon, the lower and unnecessary

ſary gratifications. The former are what make us happy as rational and moral agents; and he who is poſſeſſed of them, will almoſt always find reaſon to ſay, It is enough. Can I ſerve all the important purpoſes of my preſent ſtate, may ſuch a man ſay; can I reliſh the higheſt delight and ſatisfaction intended for me, without this or the other particular gratification, which, though not neceſſary, yet was pleaſing? If ſo, ſurely I have reaſon, great reaſon, to be content without it. And ſurely, it muſt be a wretched turn of mind, quite out of nature, and very mean, which ſo ſubjects one to any particular deſire, or object, that he can have no enjoyment of himſelf, even in the greateſt and manifold endowments and advantages of human nature, without being pleaſed and gratified in that one point. And thus, if there were no more than the truly excellent and honourable, which we cannot but diſcern in a ſtate of inward freedom, and the abject meanneſs we feel in a ſtate of ſervitude to our own lower deſires; theſe are more than enough to determine us in the firmeſt reſolution, that we will not be brought under the power of any ſuch things; under the power of any animal deſire or enjoyment, of which the true ends of life are independent; nay, of the love of life itſelf; which, though one of the ſtrongeſt affections of our nature, yet was intended to be

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Let it be conſidered, in the ſecond place, that this freedom and independency of mind is neceſſary as a ſecurity to virtue. You ſee this diſcourſe is not confined to thoſe things which the apoſtle ſpeaks of in the text; namely, things which are in themſelves lawful, but yet inexpedient; but conſiders a ſtate of ſervitude to particular paſſions, and a ſtate of moral freedom, in general, whether the object of the reigning deſire be a thing lawful or not. If indeed the deſire points to what is unlawful, the caſe is ſo much the worſe: For then, if no controling power is exerted, virtue and conſcience muſt go entirely to wreck; which we daily ſee is the caſe in many characters. And no man can ever be true to his conſcience, till he has learned to deny himſelf, and reſtrain deſire. Where there is an utter abſence of this diſcipline, and men are at the mercy of every deſire which happens to be uppermoſt, the ſtate is indeed deplorable: Men are then prepared to fall into all vices, to which, from complexion, circumſtances, example, or ſolicitation, they are at all tempted. In ſome inſtances, indeed, perhaps they are not a few, we ſee perſons of moſt amiable characters and diſpoſitions in all other reſpects, yet ruined by ſome

ſome one vice, ſome one tyrannical paſſion; SERM. ſo that the beauty of the character is, in a XIII. great meaſure, loſt, and great guilt contracted. Such perſons, perhaps, can maintain the rights of conſcience in all other reſpects, but in one inſtance it muſt give way. They want but one thing to make their characters perfect, that is, intire and uniform; but this they never attain to; and as Solomon ſpeaks, *a little folly in him who is in reputation for wiſdom and honour*, has the ſame effect as *a dead fly upon the ointment of the apothecary*, cauſing it *to ſend forth a ſtinking ſavour*. And certainly to loſe the honours, the ſubſtantial and eternal honours and rewards of virtue, and to expoſe one's ſelf to ſhame and ignominy, and great wretchedneſs, rather than reſtrain, and ſubdue, perhaps, one irregular luſt, is, in truth, a moſt unhappy and pitiable caſe.

But let us ſpeak more particularly to the caſe put in the text, to a man's being enſlaved, by a paſſion, to an object not unlawful; in how many reſpects does this endanger virtue. There is nothing more frequently inculcated in the New Teſtament, or in ſtronger terms, than ſelf-denial. And our Saviour propoſes it to ſuch as would embrace his religion, as a neceſſary preliminary, that they ſhould deny themſelves, and be ready to part even with the moſt innocent enjoyments of life, nay,

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with life itſelf, when he calls them to do ſo, and his ſervice requires it. Now, put the caſe that the ſervice of Chriſt, the cauſe of truth and virtue, ſhould require that we give up what we have been moſt paſſionately fond of; how diſtreſsful a ſtate muſt any perſon be then in, who has no power to reſtrain his paſſion? It is evident he will give up his pretenſions to the chriſtian character; for, if he has given up the power of ſubduing his deſires, his conſcience muſt ſuffer; he muſt become diſloyal to his great ſovereign, and a traitor to his cauſe. And are ſuch trials confined to times of perſecution only? No ſuch thing. God may in the general courſe of providence, take from men what has been the deſire of their eyes; they are called upon to ſubmit to this; it is their indiſpenſable duty. Yet, how can they perform, if the reluctant paſſion will bear no reſtraint? This ſhews the neceſſity of ſelf-diſcipline and denial, that we may approve ourſelves to God. And if there be any thing in the world of greater conſideration with us, than our love and loyalty to him, we cannot be accepted as his faithful ſervants. But beſides, let it be ſuppoſed that our integrity and loyalty to our Maker ſhould never be put to a trial ſo ſevere; that we ſhould never know the painful conflict between conſcience and paſſion to any particular favourite object

of

of the temporal kind, which our duty com- SERM.
mands us abſolutely to give up; yet a paſſion XIII.
of this ſort, when grown vehement and irregular, may ſo much engage the mind, as to render men unfit for the performance of duty, and negligent of it. An habitual exceſſive attachment to any one thing, does naturally beget an indifference towards other things; and the attention of the mind to this is ſo great, that other matters are probably but little noticed; even thoſe which are of the greateſt moment. The mind is enſlaved, the powers are confined and ſhackled; men can no longer act with liberty, or in that manner that becomes thoſe who are ſuppoſed to follow a cool deliberate judgment, and to regard things in proportion to their real value. But all this will convincingly appear, it will be felt, when the preſent gratification of the reigning paſſion, and the immediate call of duty, come to interfere; ſo that, either we muſt neglect the part we are to act, or muſt reſtrain the deſire which would divert us from it; in that caſe, the perſon *who has been brought under the power of any thing*, will be in great danger of giving way to the demands of it, and of reſiſting the call of conſcience; ſo that an enjoyment in itſelf innocent, through exceſs of paſſion for it, may become the cauſe of great guilt. So, for inſtance, diverſions in themſelves very

SERM. XIII. innocent, may incroach upon the time which ought to be beſtowed upon things of much greater moment; and quite indiſpoſe the mind for them; in which caſe ſuch amuſements ceaſe to be innocent. A man likewiſe may be ſo eager in the purſuit of what he may very lawfully purſue with moderation, that the gratifying this vehement deſire may render him not only unfit for, but incapable of performing his duty to his Maker, at leaſt of performing it in that manner which will anſwer any good end, and be accepted. For, what avail any ſeeming acts and exerciſes of devotion, where the thoughts are poſſeſſed by objects quite foreign to the purpoſe; where imagination is entertaining itſelf with the object to which the heart is enſlaved, while yet the man, ſo far as external form and appearance go, and words uttered by the lips, ſeems to worſhip his Maker? But as there is in this caſe no more indeed than an external appearance of devotion, he incurs the guilt of groſs hypocriſy.

Farther, *being brought under the power of any thing*, in the Apoſtle's ſenſe, however in itſelf lawful, may be very unfriendly to virtue upon this account, that if men cannot obtain the gratification upon which their hearts are ſet, in the methods of honeſty and truth, they will be very apt to deviate into diſhoneſt ways,

ways, and thus violate conſcience rather than forego the deſired object. When a man's mind is in ſuch a diſtempered ſtate that he muſt have this or the other thing; that is, when the ſtrength of deſire has made it ſeem neceſſary to him, and yet he cannot obtain it but in ways which his heart condemns, he is then in the greateſt danger. Thus, a paſſion for outward ſhew and pomp; a paſſion for rank and pre-eminence; for gain; and for gratifying a luxurious and delicate appetite; theſe, and ſuch like, have often betrayed men into diſhonourable ways and means of gratification: Their virtue thus put to the proof, has failed; though nothing here gave force to the trial, but the mere exorbitance of their own paſſion, creating a ſort of neceſſity where there was none in nature. I ſpeak not now of men who have little or no regard to the rules of righteouſneſs, and make light of committing very great crimes; but of ſuch as have very juſt ſentiments and feelings of morality, and in their hearts condemn all tranſgreſſions of its rules; who yet, urged by vehemence of paſſion, break in upon them, and the tranquility of their own minds. It has been often and juſtly obſerved, that to have few wants is one of the firſt requiſites for paſſing eaſily through life: It is indeed one of the beſt out-guards of virtue; few and ſimple wants are attended with pro-

SERM. XIII. portionably few temptations; and keeping within the modesty of nature's demands, will prevent occasions of transgressing its dictates. This deserves very seriously to be considered; for in truth, a great many, perhaps the far greater part of our wants, are the meer creatures of our own passion; and things are made necessary to us only in consequence of indulged desire. If we did but suppress such desire, we should have the full enjoyment of life without it: or if we only restrained its excess, we should then possess our souls in peace, even without its object. Only when desire becomes vehement, does the object of it become necessary; which, if we cannot attain by honest means, recourse must be had to others, or much disquiet will arise from disappointment. Dissatisfaction and discontent with our state, and the disposition of things in the world, will take possession of the mind; which as they are very painful passions, so are they unnatural and guilty. And thus you see, that passionate desires to any thing in this world, however in a moderate degree not blameable, nor the object of them a thing unlawful; yet they may greatly endanger our virtue, and prove a most fatal snare to us.

But in the third place, (to which what has been already said, leads us,) *to be thus brought under*

under the power of any thing, lays us open to much calamity and ſuffering; from which a perſon who maintains a proper independency of ſpirit, is ſure of being free. So many different things as a man has ſet his heart upon, while they are of a tranſient, precarious nature, ſo many marks he ſets up for misfortune and diſappointment to wound him thro'. So many things as he cannot enjoy himſelf without, ſo many ſources of vexation and miſery does he provide for himſelf. He is now very happy in this or the other fleeting thing, which is become neceſſary to him: But (like Jonah's gourd) it is gone, and he is inconſolable; now all this vexation of ſpirit is the fruit of eager deſire, and paſſionate fondneſs; but for theſe, he could never have felt any ſuch pain. When therefore he is diſappointed, or deprived of it, he muſt either attain to peace of mind, and ſelf-enjoyment, by ſubduing his paſſion, or muſt live a wretch: And ſure a wretched ſtate it is, where the eagerneſs of deſire ſtill continues, and gratification is out of reach; a ſtate, in which the mind becomes its own tormentor!

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But beſides the precarioufneſs of poſſeſſion, in all inſtances where things temporal are the objects of deſire; how many the hard and ſevere labours upon which immoderate deſires often

Serm. often put men, in purſuing what they want?
XIII. There is, ſaith the wiſe man, *whoſe days are ſorrow, and his travel grief; yea, his heart taketh not reſt in the night.* Such are the men who are conſtantly full of care and anxiety, of reſtleſs, unſatisfying labour; ever put upon ſuch undertakings and adventures, ſuch courſes of toil and danger, as the acquiſition of no temporal good can compenſate. No man ever ſerved a maſter more ſevere and cruel than his own headſtrong paſſions; he can never do enough in the ſervice of them; for no gratification of irregular deſires can ever give content. Have we not ſeen many ſlaves to theſe cruel taſk-maſters, whoſe anxieties and labours have quite embittered life; Who, whatever accidental ſucceſs they had in their attempts, yet found little or no enjoyment; paſſion often quite defeating its own end, and leaving no power of enjoyment: And, what is ſtill worſe, how many diſappointments do men lay themſelves open to? How often do their attempts fail of ſucceſs? Their ſchemes laid with the deepeſt contrivance, how often defeated? How do ſuch things pierce the heart of a man, who has brought himſelf into the power of uncontrolled appetite? What croſſes his aims, and defeats his hopes and endeavours, ſtrikes at the very vitals of his comfort, and are like

like wounds that bleed inwardly, and do not admit of cure. But, ſuppoſe all imaginable ſucceſs, and that men have got what their hearts are ſet upon, ſtill they often ſuffer deeply by ſolicitude, and the apprehenſion of loſing what they have acquired; every threatening circumſtance puts them to pain; and there is often more pain in the care to keep, than enjoyment in the poſſeſſion. Now, all theſe pains and calamities I have mentioned, and many more might be named, are in reality the offspring of fond and deluded deſire; and but from that could have no exiſtence; which evidently ſhews, that to be under the power of ſuch deſire, is indeed the bane of man's peace and enjoyment, inſtead of making him happy. Sect. XIII.

If we lay theſe things together, and at the ſame time conſider a ſervitude to our own paſſions, as mean and reproachful to nature; as a thing moſt hurtful to our virtue, and as the ſource of manifold calamities, which we ſhould never otherwiſe have known; it will then be moſt evident, that the Apoſtle's reſolution was manly and wiſe; *that he would not be brought under the power of any thing.*

And this will be ſtill farther confirmed, to men who have tried it, by the experience of that ſubſtantial and ſincere pleaſure which ariſes from virtuous ſelf-denial. When a man

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man has, in a particular inſtance, reſtrained deſire, and refuſed to gratify it; when he has done this from principle merely, and a ſenſe of its being expedient; with what joy does he reflect upon it! eſpecially when the deſire has been paſſionately ſtrong; and in ſome inſtances, of more weight and importance in life, there is perhaps no ſelf-enjoyment to be compared to this. A man's own heart applauds him, as having acted a part becoming the dignity of his nature, and which is truly honourable. No joy, equal to this, did any man ever taſte in gratifying the impetuous longings of deſire. And in truth it may be juſtly repreſented as one advantage of our preſent frame, that by demanding from us the exerciſe of ſuch diſcipline, it gives us an opportunity of enjoying ſo much real and laſting happineſs: a happineſs, far unlike the pleaſure of gratifying irregular deſire; which is momentary, and palls the languid appetite: Whereas this virtuous pleaſure is of a permanent nature, without ſatiety; and we never reflect upon having acted ſuch a laudable part, but with freſh ſelf-approbation. Which ſatisfaction is carried to the higheſt, and enjoyed in the moſt exquiſite reliſhes of it, when men are conſcious to themſelves, not only that they have, in particular inſtances, denied themſelves, and reſiſted irre-

gular deſires; but that by an habitual exer- SERM. ciſe of this ſort of diſcipline, they have ſub- XIII. dued their irregular paſſions, and reduced them into ſuch a well-adjuſted temper, that they ceaſe to give them any farther trouble. When the ſtrength of deſire comes to be duly proportioned, nothing then remains but what the dignity and importance of the object warrant, and right reaſon approves. When, thus, a pleaſing and beautiful calm obtains in the mind, which, like the appeaſed ocean, flows regularly and gently to its proper limits; then, then indeed is the ſtate of mind ſuch as does honour to human nature; and in which a man will find that peace and ſatisfaction, which paſſeth all underſtanding; and a glorious diſcipline it ſurely is, which produceth ſuch effects!

But that we may now draw to a concluſion of this diſcourſe; I have deſcribed to you ſuch a ſervitude to deſire and paſſion, as may well be conſidered as the root of all evil; for men will never depart from the rules of wiſdom and goodneſs, never act in oppoſition to the manifeſt dictates of conſcience, if they are not under the power of ſome corrupt and irregular affection. And you ſee likewiſe, wherein the great ſecurity of our virtue, and the peace of our minds conſiſts, namely, in being maſters of ourſelves; maintaining a freedom

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freedom from all ſervitude to paſſion. While this is our happineſs, what ſhall hinder us to go on as cool reaſon and conſcience direct, in purſuing the tendency of the nobler principles and inſtincts of our nature? At the ſame time, the inferior appetites and deſires, kept in proper order and ſubordination, will give us little or no diſturbance.

To this noble ſelf-diſcipline, therefore, which is of ſo great importance in human life, let us apply ourſelves with all diligence. Let us give way to no paſſion, however clamorous, till we have examined it at the bar of reaſon and conſcience; if theſe approve, and no other inexpediency appear, let it be gratified: But if they forbid, or even heſitate and are doubtful, let the paſſion be renounced; otherwiſe we do not at all *quit us like men.* And it is highly expedient that we ſhould uſe ſuch ſelf-diſcipline, not only where our conſciences are nearly concerned, and in matters of right and wrong; but, even with reſpect to things lawful in themſelves; for it may be very inconvenient, many times, to let paſſion have full way, even in theſe. Beſides, it may be highly profitable to exerciſe and accuſtom ourſelves to ſelf-denial, in matters of leſs moment, that we may be prepared for it, in thoſe of greater. Numberleſs inſtances occur, in which an attentive and conſidering

ſidering perſon will ſee reaſon to deny himſelf; where notwithſtanding, the preſent object of deſire cannot be called unlawful, or of any great importance. And it will be found greatly profitable to keep the controlling power, by frequent exerciſe, in proper ſtrength; and by habit, to acquire a facility of ſubmitting our paſſions to it. It is a wiſe and uſeful part of the diſcipline of children to accuſtom them to the reſtraint of their many fond and hurtful deſires and paſſions: to refuſe gratifying them, in many inſtances, merely by ſuch refuſal, to prepare them eaſily to brook reſtraint. And where this is managed with prudence, it is of unſpeakable advantage. Now it is to be conſidered, that there may be much of the child in our deſires and paſſions, all our days; that is, much fondneſs and folly; and as ſuch they muſt be kept always under controul. In this let us exerciſe ourſelves, that we *may not be brought under the power of any*; and may be always fitted to poſſeſs our ſouls in peace and tranquillity, ſo long as the great purpoſes of life are ſerved, and the nobler affections of our nature gratified. SERM. XIII.

SERMON XIV.

Our abſolute dependence on God.

ACTS, XVII. 28.

For in Him we live, and move, and have our being.

THE principles of natural and revealed religion, upon which we are to form our conduct, and upon which our hopes rely, are plain, and eaſily learned by all who, with common underſtanding, will give reaſonable attention. And that theſe are chiefly the ſubject of public inſtruction, the ſeaſons of which frequently return, is not ſo to be underſtood, as if it were a laborious thing to obtain a ſufficient knowledge in religion; or as if men were to expect, from time to time, any thing new; whereas indeed the greateſt uſe of theſe miniſtrations is to keep

keep up in the mind lively impreſſions of religion, in thoſe who have already received them; and to make ſuch impreſſions upon others, as that the heart and life may be made better, and the great end of all religion, the ſalvation of our ſouls, may be anſwered. And beſides this, it muſt, to perſons of a right taſte, be pleaſing, from time to time, to entertain themſelves with meditations upon thoſe ſubjects, which of all things are the greateſt and moſt intereſting; and in which we meet with what tends to excite our beſt and moſt agreeable affections. My intention is, at preſent, to diſcourſe concerning our dependence upon the Deity, our conſtant immediate dependence, for life and all the powers and enjoyments of it; a ſubject upon which many uſeful reflections may be made. SERM. XIV.

The apoſtle Paul, in the text, teaches us that *in him we live, and move, and have our being*. To give you a full and juſt view of this, I ſhall particularly conſider the human frame; and ſhew that from the loweſt to the higheſt of our powers and enjoyments, and in the whole of our conſtitution and make, we are abſolutely dependent upon the power and goodneſs of God continually exerciſed towards us.

We are taught in Scripture, and it is the language too of the beſt philoſophy, that our

SERM. XIV. bodies are the workmanſhip of God. This is ſet forth in a very elegant manner in the 139th Pſalm. *I will praiſe thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvellous are thy works, and that my ſoul knoweth right well: My ſubſtance was not hid from thee when I was made in ſecret, and curiouſly wrought in the lower parts of the earth. Thine eyes did ſee my ſubſtance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were faſhioned, when as yet there was none of them.* But here we may carry our ſpeculations farther. For not only the form, but the very matter of which our bodies, and all other material ſtructures, are framed, could have no ſubſiſtence but in God, in the conſtant energy of his power. We may ſee that all matter conſiſts of innumerable parts joined and adhering together. It has been thought demonſtrable, that in dividing theſe parts, there can be no end, nor any particle of matter ſo ſmall, but that it is ſtill diviſible. However, without entering into that argument, we ſee evidently, that all that we call matter or body, is extended and ſolid, and conſiſts of innumerable parts. Now by what bond are theſe parts, evidently ſeparable, held together? This is the queſtion. To ſay that they attract one another, and that this is an eſſential quality of matter, is ſaying juſt nothing.

For

For whence this attraction? whence this quality, which we ſee is amazingly different in degree of power, in different parts of matter? Here we are forced to call in a foreign power and agency; the agency of the original creating mind, without the conſtant exertion of which there could be no union or coheſion of the parts; and conſequently no material object at all. This is neceſſary to the ſubſiſtence of the leaſt grain of ſand, the leaſt apparent atom. And without this conſtant operation of mind, all matter muſt viſibly ceaſe to be. SERM. XIV.

After this is once received by the mind as a juſt account, no one will heſitate in aſcribing to the energy of the firſt cauſe, thoſe qualities and powers of the fibres and fluids of which the human body is compoſed, that are neceſſary to ſuch an animated frame, and which are wonderfully adapted to the purpoſes of it. By the power of the firſt cauſe the vital motion firſt began; and by that it is continued, according to certain laws of nature, as they are called; but which, in truth, are no other than the rules and meaſures by which the original energy and activity is exerted. For many ages men were accuſtomed to ſpeak of certain laws of matter, as that whereby the ſtate and various modifications of it were determined, without any immediate energy of the Supreme cauſe. They ſpoke of the ſpon-

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taneous generation of many animals, from a ſuppoſed vital heat diffuſed by the ſun thro' nature. But the knowledge which the curious and attentive have acquired of nature, by repeated experiments, (and ſurely that is the only way of attaining ſuch knowledge) ſhews, that there are no ſuch material energies, but that all is the workmanſhip of an intelligent cauſe, by whom all the bodies of animals even of the meaneſt inſects, are framed and quickened; by whom alſo the individuals of every ſpecies are made ſo like to one another in all their parts, and every ſpecies from age to age preſerved. Many are the curious obſervations which the beſt naturaliſts have made to illuſtrate this, but perhaps it would not be proper to take up your time in this place, with an account of them. Let us therefore paſs from the external frame, and vital motion, to other and higher things, which are juſt as unaccountable, without introducing the energy of the ſupreme mind, or, which is the ſame thing to us, of intelligent cauſes, acting by a power derived from him. One of the moſt obvious things that concern us, is a certain power or capacity, by which we receive the impreſſions of external objects. Theſe we get by means of our ſenſes, ſuch as, ſight, hearing, ſmell, taſte, &c. Every one knows that he does by means

means of theſe ſenſes get a perception of light and colours, of ſounds, of the figure of body, and ſuch like ſenſible qualities. And every man is convinced, that if the particular ſenſe thro' which a ſimple idea is introduced, were wanting, he could never have that idea; no deſcription from others would give it him. The man who is born blind can never be made to perceive what light is; and the man who is born deaf, can as little apprehend what is ſound. But tho' we know we get theſe perceptions by means of our ſenſes, yet who can ſhew any connection between the organ and the ſenſation of the mind? For example, between the eye and the perception of colours, between the ear and the perception of ſounds? We are uſed to ſpeak of hearing with the ear, and of ſeeing with the eye, as the moſt familiar of all things; and we know that if the organ of ſenſe be in a natural and healthful ſtate, we have thoſe ſenſations, and think there is no difficulty in it. Yet upon a more cloſe enquiry we ſhall find, as above, that no philoſophy can make out any connection at all between the preſence of an object, or its affecting the external organ, and that perception which is raiſed in our minds. It is not the eye, but the mind which ſees; it is not the ear, but the mind which hears. And the raiſing of theſe ideas or per-

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ceptions, is the effect of a cauſe quite different from matter. In a word, here we want, and cannot rationally ſolve the difficulty by any thing elſe, but the Creator's power. Without this we could receive no ideas of objects at all.

But as we have this power of receiving ideas from him, (rather it is his power by which they are raiſed in the mind) ſo there is a faculty in us of retaining the ideas of things once got, which faculty we call memory. And how amazingly does this precious endowment contribute to our happineſs! What an irreparable loſs would we feel in human life without it! but who can give any account of the cauſe of it? We find that what is laid up in our memory does ſometimes preſent itſelf to the thoughts ſpontaneouſly, and without any deſign or effort of ours. At other times, we are ſenſible of endeavouring to call up to our remembrance the things which are paſt, and we can often do it by the power of recollection. In ſome men memory is tenacious and faithful; in others, leſs ſo. But we ſee almoſt all men are endowed with it in ſuch a degree as is neceſſary to ſerve the purpoſes of human life. Now, can any thing that we know of the properties of matter account for this! or any property which is diſcernible in any of the parts of the human body? Or can we ſay that we have given to ourſelves this

power

power of treaſuring up our ideas, and calling them up to our notice, and attention, as we think fit? No. Another cauſe muſt be ſought after. It is no doubt by the ſame power from which we firſt receive our ideas, that we are enabled to remember them; by the power of our Creator acting upon us. That one man cannot remember as well as another, and that in old age, with the powers of the body, the memory is ſeen to decay; is no juſt exception to this. For it only ſhews that there are certain rules and meaſures, certain means by which the power of the Supreme Being acts, although he could, no doubt, act without them. Should it be, for example, by the power of God immediately acting, that we receive the idea of light through the eye; yet the perſons who are born blind never receive that perception: Which ſhews that it is a law of nature, or one of the rules of the Divine adminiſtration, that by means of an organ, the eye, we ſhall receive it, and no otherwiſe. Juſt ſo, there may be a frame and ſtate of the body which is the means of our remembering; and which may in ſome be more happily adapted to that purpoſe, than in others; and more ſo in one part of life, than in another; yet ſtill there is no rational account to be given of the thing itſelf, but by a power acting upon us, without the continual operation of which the ſenſitive power could not avail. To

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To proceed to the powers of judging and reaſoning; we are taught in the book of Job that *the inſpiration of the Almighty gives men underſtanding:* As it is from this they receive their original ideas, ſo is it by this Divine influence they are enabled to reaſon; to judge of things when compared together; and to deduce from certain and received principles, a great variety of concluſions by which our knowledge is increaſed. We likewiſe ſee this admirable and uſeful faculty given to men, in a great variety of degrees. The ſagacity, penetration, and diſcernment of ſome men, ſurprizes all around them. Others, far inferior to them, and in great danger of falling into error and miſtake, betray upon many occaſions much weakneſs and folly. And although a careful culture of the mind, and a patient attention to the objects of thought, will go a great way to improve the judgment, and lead men into the paths of truth; yet no poſſible culture will make the underſtanding and capacity of ſome equal to that of others. Here God has made a difference, which by no means in our power can be taken away. He gives the clear perception, and the ſtrong judgment: All that variety we ſee in the natural powers, is from him, who giveth *to every man ſeverally as he will.* He gives, he continues theſe powers; and when he pleaſes, he can withdraw

withdraw them, which is often ſeen to be the caſe; inſomuch that men who have been celebrated for wiſdom, have ſunk into a ſtate of moſt compaſſionable and childiſh weakneſs. Such is our preſent ſtate, and ſuch our dependence upon the providence of God, that tho' the intellectual powers ſhould not go to ruin by means of the natural decay of the bodily frame; yet they are liable to hurt, by many accidents, many diſorders, by which men may be ſunk into ſtupidity or raiſed to phrenzy; thus rendered, in either caſe, utterly incapable of the functions of rational life. SERM. XIV.

But the moſt important part of our frame is ſtill behind, that is, our moral powers and ſenſes. By theſe we become capable of knowing and loving what is true, and pure, and juſt, and honourable; hence ſpring our perceptions of the great, and good, and lovely, in characters and actions; and we are raiſed by them to a moſt exalted ſtation, as bearing indeed the image of our Maker. To this part of our frame we owe it, that the main ſources of our happineſs lie within us, and are independent of external events. He who made the hearing or the deaf, the ſeeing or the blind; he who gives or with-holds the ideas and perceptions of external objects, does alſo give us theſe moral perceptions, which are of ſuch mighty importance. Quite different from

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SERM. XIV. mere ideas of the outward object, which might be without any ſuch moral feelings of the mind, they are an order of ſenſations perfectly diſtinct, and the immediate work of God. If he had not planted them originally in our natures, no diſcipline or culture could have given them. But as we are framed with a ſenſe of the great and beautiful, of the proportioned and harmonious, in external objects, or the contrary; and are endowed with a taſte to which theſe appear lovely and agreeable, or deformed and diſpleaſing, (from which a great fund of delight ariſes to us in the contemplation of nature) ſo alſo hath the Creator made us with a much more intereſting ſenſe of dignity and beauty, or of deformity and meanneſs, in characters and actions. Why ſhould a diſtreſſed object raiſe pity in us? Why ſhould our purſuing the tendency of this affection, in generouſly relieving the diſtreſſed, give a pleaſing ſenſation even in our reflecting upon it? Why ſhould one character appear amiable and pleaſing in contemplating it, and another raiſe horror and averſion in the mind? The plain anſwer is, that we are framed with powers and ſenſes which neceſſarily render it ſo; juſt as light is made ſweet, and as it is a pleaſing thing to behold the ſun. And there can be no reaſon to doubt but that, in the feelings of theſe internal ſenſes, the Divine power is to be

be recognized, as in the perceptions given us of external objects, by means of the bodily organs. But before we quit this view of the powers and affections of the mind, there is one obſervation applicable to all of them, which is of great uſe in convincing us of our dependence upon an agency, not our own, for our operations; and it is what the experience of every man, who is attentive to his own ſtate, muſt preſent to him; namely, that upon ſome occaſions, the ſenſations of the mind ſhall be very lively, the apprehenſion quick and clear, the reaſoning powers ſhall act with eaſe, and the exerciſe of the beſt affections be vigorous, and moſt pleaſing. At other times, every thing ſhall be the reverſe of this; all the ſenſations and affections languid, the rational powers in a kind of ſtupor; and the whole mind quite out of tune, diſagreeable to, and diſpleaſed with itſelf: And, at ſuch times, no endeavours of our own are ſucceſsful to make it otherwiſe. This is often known to be the caſe, when the cauſe is quite out of ſight: Nothing obſerveable in the ſtate of the health having happened, nor any extraordinary event to which it may be aſcribed. Yet ſurely the difference between the manner of acting of the ſame perſon, on theſe different occaſions, and the ſtate of mind, is as great as might be expected in quite different

Serm. XIV. ferent or oppoſite characters: And there is ſcarce any thing we can be more ſenſible of than this, that this matter is not owing to any choice or acting of ours; but to a cauſe which is not at all in our own power. Perhaps it is really owing to different turns in the ſtate of the body; we cannot ſay the contrary; becauſe we do not know what effects the ſtate of the body may have upon that of the mind; but this at leaſt, we are ſure of, that whatever foreign cauſe it is owing to, that cauſe is ſtill under the influence and direction of the Supreme mind, in whoſe hand our breath is, and whoſe are all our ways. However, from hence we may learn that we are dependent upon God, not only for our original powers, which are his workmanſhip, but for the free exerciſe of them.

And this will ſtill appear in a more affecting light, when we conſider to how many diſorders, in the ſtate of the body, we are liable; whereby the organs of ſenſation and action are ſo hurt and impaired, that the uſe of the thinking powers is in a great meaſure, nay, ſometimes wholly loſt by them. But this has been already mentioned, and is ſo obvious, that there can be no occaſion for inſiſting farther upon it.

Let us now come to our voluntary external actions. And here we ſee what is as myſte-

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rious and unaccountable, without the agency of the original acting power, as any thing yet named. We ſeem perfectly ſenſible that by an act of our wills, we can move our bodies and limbs. And if they are not in an unhealthful ſtate, we find that the power of our minds over them, to a certain degree, never fails. But now let any man ſet himſelf down to think, what connection he can find between a thought, a volition of his mind, and the motion of his material frame! How ſuch a volition ſhould move a hand or a foot! Anatomiſts have very exactly deſcribed all perhaps that is to be known of the form of the parts of the nerves and muſcles, and that ſtate of them upon which voluntary motion depends. But then, as to the main point, how the nerves, and by the means of them, the muſcles, are moved by a thought of the mind, they are utterly ignorant. As it is impoſſible for us to perceive any connection between the affecting of the bodily organs by an external object, and raiſing a perception or idea in the mind; ſo likewiſe, it is impoſſible to explain how the thoughts of the mind ſhould produce motion in the body. Here again, we muſt have recourſe to the original power, without whom we can do nothing. And indeed, the ſoundeſt philoſophy teaches us to reſt here, that as the great original power has eſtabliſh-

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Serm. XIV. ed a connection between the acts of our will, and our bodily voluntary motions; ſo by a preſent and conſtant energy derived from that power, this connection is maintained. No other ſatisfactory account is to be given of the matter. And ſurely it is very ſurprizing to think of the power which the affections and paſſions of the mind, have upon the bodily frame. Some of them, particularly joy and grief, ſhall riſe upon ſome occaſions to ſuch a degree, as to deſtroy it intirely; and of this there have been many inſtances. How aſtoniſhing the union between mind and matter, between mere thought and body! We may juſtly ſay with the Pſalmiſt, *that we are fearfully and wonderfully made!*

I ſhall conclude this illuſtration with a few remarks upon pleaſure and pain; which may contribute to caſt ſtill farther light upon the ſujbect.

Pleaſure is intirely the gift of God to us; we could not create it, more than we could make ourſelves. There is a pleaſing enjoyment of animal life, and health, which is of great conſideration in our ſtate. When the health is ſound, and there is an eaſy and clear flow of animal ſpirits, exiſtence is delightful to us. When we ſay we are well, we ſo far intimate that we have pleaſure in being; and it is great and various pleaſure, which makes

the apprehenſions of being otherwiſe, or of ceaſing to be, ſo very painful to us. Our Creator is undoubtedly the author of this delight: He has given, and he maintains the ſenſations; He too has contrived, and upholds that ſtate of things, and that combination of parts and powers, from which enjoyment ariſes. SERM. XIV.

But when we proceed to contemplate the various pleaſures for which we are formed, in the fruition of external objects, or the powers and affections of our own minds, we ſee they are in a manner innumerable. How great the number of ſenſual gratifications! of the pleaſures of ſight, of hearing, of the taſte, &c.! how admirably varied, every day, in every circumſtance inviting us to adore the goodneſs of the Creator! Again, how manifold the pleaſures of the imagination, that wonderful faculty, which can add to the real, additional ſcenes of entertainment of its own creating! How manifold thoſe delights which are more pure and intellectual, in contemplating the world of ſpirits, eſpecially that moſt glorious Being, the Author of all! From the knowledge of his exiſtence, and high perfections; from the relations in which we ſtand to him; from a ſenſe of his favour and approbation, and the promiſed happy fruits of it, how unſpeakable the delight! Who that has not felt, can imagine the joy which ſprings from the

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light of his countenance? To make men capable of this, and of a just confidence in God, there must be a right state of the heart and affections. But this again, in itself, yields pure and noble delight to the reflecting mind. All the joys which our senses know, are not worthy to be compared with that which results from a consciousness of good affections, and of good actions performed upon right principles. To all this may be added, the delight which men have in the improvement of their minds in knowledge, wherein progress may be made that knows no end.

Now, none of the external objects of our delight are properly of our own making: They are provided for us by the bountiful author of our nature; and are, in many respects, quite independent of us. So are also the powers by which we have a perception of pleasure in them; nay so is every particular sensation of pleasure; for we might be cut immediately off from all enjoyment by the suspension of that energy, but for a moment, upon which even our whole being rests. But what I would have particularly observed here is, that we find in various persons a remarkable variety in the degree of pleasure, which, by means of the same powers and affections, they have in the same objects. In other words, some have a much greater sensibility and delicacy of taste than

than others. Now what is this to be aſcribed to? We very well know that the effect of it is very conſiderable in human life; in as much as one perſon, in the ſame circumſtances, and converſing with the ſame objects, ſhall have much more delight than another. In vain ſhall we aſcribe this, intirely, to diſcipline or culture. We muſt have recourſe to the frame and make of the mind, and the Creator's power diſplayed in it. But who knows to what length that power could carry, and in ſome ſtages of exiſtence may in fact carry, this delicacy and ſenſibility of delight? How high the joys which God may thus beſtow upon us? And how intire is our dependence upon him, when not only the objects of gratification, not only the capacities and powers of receiving it, are his workmanſhip, but even the preciſe meaſure and degree of it, in the ſenſations we poſſeſs! SERM. XIV.

Farther, as an addition to all preſent enjoyment of the objects with which we are converſant, we have alſo all the pleaſures which ſpring from the hope of future good; which are, in many caſes, much greater than all that we now poſſeſs; more important to us; and without which life itſelf would be very miſerable. All this is of God, who has given us the faculty of looking into futurity, and of

SERM. XIV. realizing what is appointed to come to paſs, in very diſtant ſtages of exiſtence.

When we turn our thoughts to pain, on the other hand; how clearly do we ſee, and with what awe does it ſtrike the mind, that we are all liable to great ſufferings, which it is not in our power to prevent! The pains of the body, which are innumerable (I ſpeak now of what the bodily ſtate is liable to) are often very alarming; but yet of ſmall account, when compared with thoſe of the mind; ſome of which however, (indeed the moſt acute and intolerable of them, ariſing from a conſciouſneſs of great guilt) by a regular life and good conduct, we may eſcape. And here our rejoicing is this, that under that Being in whoſe power we abſolutely are, if we ſincerely do his will, it ſhall be well with us. We ſhall eſcape the torments of a guilty conſcience, and all thoſe evils which are the effects of Divine indignation. Without aſſurance of this, who could rejoice in exiſtence, or account it at all a bleſſing? But, as was ſaid, when we contemplate human nature as liable to innumerable evils, from which there is no defence but in God; how feelingly does this convince us of our dependence upon him! What was above obſerved concerning pleaſure, holds true alſo with reſpect to pain; that the meaſure

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of it in the various circumſtances of ſuffering, and the ſenſibility of it, which we ſee in different perſons, is very different. Some ſhall bear without much complaint, what would make other men very miſerable. And we ſee that ſenſibility ſometimes ariſe to ſuch a degree, that men in circumſtances not very uncommon, yet ſuffer the greateſt anguiſh and pain, that can well be imagined; their minds upon the rack, and their own imaginations, like the worſt and moſt implacable of furies, tormenting them! No reaſoning with them of any avail to mitigate their ſufferings, nor any conſolation admitted! This is a very deplorable ſtate; and men have been ſeen to fall into it, whoſe circumſtances in life were far from being diſtreſsful, and even ſuch whoſe lives were far from being bad. Human nature can hardly appear in a more humbling ſtate, than in ſome ſuch caſes. And from them we may learn, that there needs no more to make us very wretched, than the letting looſe our own imaginations upon us. SERM. XIV.

In theſe and ſuch like particulars we may ſee our abſolute dependence upon the Supreme Being, that in him we live, and move, and have our ſubſiſtence. Our bodies, as to the very exiſtence, as well as frame of them; our minds, in all their powers, affections, and actings; our pleaſures and our pains are all,

SERM. XIV. and altogether, dependent upon God. He is ever preſent with us; his power conſtantly employed about us; without which we could have no continued exiſtence.

From all this it may appear, that it was a very wrong kind of philoſophy which taught that the world might have been by the Divine power, at firſt, ſo conſtituted, and ſuch laws given it, that without any continued application of that power it might ſubſiſt, and perſevere in the courſe in which it was at the beginning; and that it required equal energy to annihilate any thing, as to create it. This philoſophy is overthrown by what was obſerved, in the beginning of this diſcourſe, concerning matter, namely, that no ſuch thing can ever have any exiſtence but by the immediate energy of Divine power; and that the qualities of attraction, coheſion, &c. by which it is what it is, are no other than the effects of this energy: For, if theſe things be ſo, there would be no more requiſite to annihilate matter, or which is the ſame thing to the purpoſes of the creation and of life, to make it ceaſe to be what it now is, than a ſuſpenſion of that power by which at firſt it exiſted. Becauſe, if there be no attraction, no coheſion of parts, there can be no matter; and when the power of attraction and coheſion ceaſes to act, the effects, that is, attraction and coheſion, ceaſe to be. It is therefore much more

rational to ſuppoſe a conſtant preſence and energy of the Divine mind, on the things which are made: and that the Providence by which they ſubſiſt, is, in truth, a continued creation of them. SERM. XIV.

I ſhould now ſhew to what practical purpoſes theſe principles may be improved, but the time will not allow me to enter upon this at preſent; I ſhall therefore conclude with this one obſervation:

That when we ſee our dependence upon the Supreme Mind is ſo abſolute, for life and all the powers of it; we are therefore not to wonder that the Holy Scriptures ſpeak ſo much of a Divine agency upon the mind of man; as alſo of our aſking, and receiving help from God, in carrying on the great and important purpoſes of life and religion. *God gives wiſdom and counſel. The inſpiration of the Almighty teaches men underſtanding.* Our Saviour promiſes that God's *holy ſpirit ſhall be given to them who aſk him.* We are taught *that God works in us to will and to do of his good pleaſure.* And we ſee the New Teſtament writers celebrate the grace of God, as that to which they owe their all as Chriſtians. Theſe expreſſions, however ſtrong, have been ſo explained as almoſt quite to loſe their meaning, by ſome who found them not very conſiſtent with a ſcheme in philoſophy of which they were fond. But

SERM. XIV. the more we attend to ourſelves, and to the frame and workings of our own minds, we ſhall be the more convinced of an important reality in a Divine agency upon the minds of men; and ſhall be the more encouraged to aſk help from God, and to depend upon him. The manner of this, indeed, we ſhall not be able to explain; as how few of the moſt obvious things in nature can we explain? But this is no objection againſt the poſſibility, or even the probability of ſuch agency. Nay ſo far does it appear, upon thoroughly inquiring into theſe matters, from being improbable, that it ſeems manifeſtly abſurd not to ſuppoſe it.

SERMON

SERMON XV.

Practical reflections arising from a sense of our absolute dependence on God.

Acts XVII. 28.

For in Him we live, and move, and have our being.

FEW things do we see in nature, but what are mysterious to us. Outward appearances, and the manner in which various objects affect us, we know as facts; but when we come to inquire into the real causes of things, their nature and manner of operation, we find our researches quickly at an end. And if we are at a loss with respect to the most obvious things, and which are most familiar to us, how much less shall mortal man *by searching find out God, or find out the Almighty*

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to perfection? Who knows the manner of his operations? Who can account for the omnipresence of his power, the subsistence of things in it, and the production of the astonishing appearances we see by it? Thus far, however, from the plainest and most undeniable principles, and by just reasoning from them, we are taught; that there is a power of the first intelligent cause every where exerted in the universe; and that this is the foundation of the existence of all things in it; and that the general fixed laws of nature are the exertions of this power, according to those rules and measures which infinite wisdom at first laid down, for serving the great purposes which are to be carried on in the universe.

In the former discourse, I considered this with a particular view to mankind; and shewed you our immediate dependence upon the Divine Being, for our subsistence, for all the powers of sensation and action, for imagination, memory, and our moral powers; and, in conclusion, shewed, that the language of the Holy Scripture, with respect to those things, is perfectly consonant to what reason teaches. The illustration of this argument necessarily led to some things, which, tho' important and evidently true, yet are not obvious to every capacity: But the use and improvement to be made of it, is very obvious; which is proposed

poſed as the ſubject of the preſent diſcourſe. SERM. XV.

The firſt thing that ſtrikes the mind, in meditating upon this ſubject, is admiration of that original eternal Being, in whom we live, and move; who is every where preſent, whoſe eye is upon every creature, whoſe power is every where at once exerted, maintaining the general laws of nature, and by particular providences interpoſing, as to infinite wiſdom ſeemeth fit. He is preſent, not in this world only, not in this ſyſtem only, but in all worlds, wherever exiſting in the whole immenſity of ſpace. Nor ſhall we find much difficulty in admitting this, provided we can conceive the idea of the ſame power exerted in ſeveral places at once. For if the ſame power may be exerted in ſeveral places at once, it may be exerted in all places at once. That is, there is no abſurdity, or contradiction, in the one, more than the other. But indeed, how aſtoniſhing is the thought! One mind every where preſent, and acting every where! Surely ſuch knowledge is too wonderful for us; it is high, we cannot attain to it! How amazing that power, which governs all the worlds on high with perfect conſiſtency, with perfect eaſe! To look up to the heavens, and ſtarry firmament, when ſhining in all its glories; to think of the immenſity and number of theſe bodies; and that they

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they are all made by, all under the direction of one hand; that from the beginning, till now, they have preſerved their order exactly; andth at in all the ſwiftneſs, and force of motion; throughout the univerſe, nothing has befallen to cauſe any confuſion in it! And moreover, that by the ſame laws of general providence, by which theſe, to us inconceivably great bodies, are governed, even the leaſt animal, plant, ſpire of graſs, and grain of ſand, are alſo taken care of, and regulated according to the order of their beings; ſurely no attentive mind can contemplate all this, without profound adoration? I have often thought it not at all wonderful, that the nations who had loſt the knowledge of the true God, in a great meaſure, ſhould have fallen into that way of thinking, which very generally prevailed among them, of diſtributing the ſeveral parts of the univerſe, to be taken care of by ſeveral divinities; tho', at the ſame time, the wiſeſt of them acknowledged but one original, to whom all the reſt were ſubordinated, and from whom they ſprung; for it muſt be owned, the narrowneſs of the human mind might be much at a loſs, in conceiving the ſame individual active principle exerting a power every where, and at the ſame time! Yet how much nobler the thought, that the ſame original principle is really every where

preſent, and that every creature has its ſubſiſtence in, and is govern'd by it! How does this raiſe our admiration of the Being who made us, *in whoſe hand our breath is, and whoſe are all our ways!* SERM. XV.

And ſurely, in good minds, this admiration muſt be attended with great joy. We know that this Being, who made, ſuſtains and governs us, is perfectly good; and that the communication of happineſs is a real ultimate end, which is purſued in the whole work of creation and providence. Now, this Being is ever preſent to us: In him we have our exiſtence, we live in him, and ever muſt, in every circumſtance, in every ſtate, in every world, in which he ſhall think fit to place us; in every point of eternal duration, in every point of immenſe ſpace, as his good pleaſure ſhall appoint. He is, and he is the ſame for ever. The poetical expreſſion of the Pſalmiſt is very pleaſing. *Thou haſt been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadſt formed the earth; even from everlaſting to everlaſting, thou art God.*

But here a thought of very great importance will naturally come acroſs our minds; namely, that we are not in the ſame ſtate with many ſpecies of creatures we behold, ſubſiſted alſo by the divine bounty, but neceſſarily determined

Serm. XV. termined in their motions, and actions, so as to answer the end of their being. Whereas we are made capable of knowing right and wrong; and are under a law to God, by obeying which sincerely, we become the objects of his favour; as on the contrary, by disobedience and rebellion, we shall certainly fall under his displeasure. We can plainly collect this from the very frame of human nature, and the powers of conscience planted in us: We likewise have it very clearly declared, and frequently inculcated in the Holy Scriptures. Now this view of things strikes the mind with awe. Can a wicked man rejoice in God? Is it not rather terror to him to think of such a being, so perfectly holy, so powerful? Certainly it must. *There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.* For, if such will but give themselves leave to think, they must perceive that they are under an administration, which never will, never can favour them. They must be sensible that they deserve, and that they are liable to punishment from God. And which of them can say what that punishment shall be? Indeed, the utter loss of virtue must, in its own nature, make creatures framed as we are, miserable, as well as deprive them of the noblest happiness, which undoubtedly results only from virtue. Insomuch that considering human nature abstractedly

ſtractedly from any relation in which we may be ſuppoſed to ſtand to the Supreme Being, as our moral governor, yet to be very wicked muſt iſſue in being very wretched. But certainly it is an additional conſideration of great weight, *that the face of God is ſet againſt them that do evil*; and that he will certainly interpoſe, as a ruler and judge, to puniſh them; that by every criminal action, they expoſe themſelves to his diſpleaſure, and, as the ſcriptures ſpeak, *are treaſuring up wrath againſt the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.* He knows all the evil thoughts and diſpoſitions of their minds, and the principles upon which they have acted, as unerringly as the miſdeed of their hands; and will judge impartially, *for he is no reſpecter of perſons.* External diſtinctions, great fortunes, eminent privileges and endowments, make no difference in his eſtimation; according to the real temper of the mind, and to the tenor of the converſation, he will judge. SERM. XV.

On the other hand, *light is ſown for the upright, and gladneſs for the righteous.* If men know it has been their ſtudy to avoid offence, and to pleaſe God by obeying the law of their nature; if they have been carefully obſervant of all intimations of the divine will, however made known to them; if they are really watchful

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watchful over themſelves, and in points wherein they have failed are ſincerely penitent, labouring to amend for the future; and if the fruits of righteouſneſs appear in them; then will they have the teſtimony of their conſciences, and hope in God, which muſt neceſſarily be attended with great joy. Such have the divine favour ever with them, taking care of them, and conducting them through the various ſtages of life, to the perfection and happineſs intended for them; their ſtrong ſtay and ſupport under all afflictions and diſcouragements; and the ſure foundation of hope amidſt all events. No more is to be wiſhed. And doubtleſs, it is one of the moſt pleaſing of all reflections, that we are, in the Divine eſtimation, according to the real moral character only. Let a man's endowments be ever ſo low; his circumſtances and ſtate in the world ever ſo obſcure; let external diſadvantages and afflictions multiply around him; yet, if he is a perſon of real worth, God knows him and loves him; and will undoubtedly, in the propereſt and beſt time, interpoſe to give him the moſt ſubſtantial teſtimonies of his favour.

Theſe reflections naturally lead to the next thing I would inſiſt upon, viz. that a ſenſe of our living and having our being in God, is a conſideration of the greateſt weight to deter

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us from all evil; and to engage us, with growing delight, in the practice of all virtue. From what has been already ſaid, it evidently follows, that God knows, and ſees all our actions, nay, even the very thoughts of our hearts; as being ever moſt intimately preſent with us. Now, is there not the greateſt reverence due to ſuch a preſence? Ingenuous minds are very careful to behave with great and exact decency, before thoſe who are much ſuperior to them; eſpecially before perſons of eminent and diſtinguiſhed worth. And any indignity done to ſuch perſons, any thing which ſhews negligence and diſregard of them, is very juſtly accounted abominable. Men who have any ſenſe of worth, or even of decency, will ſhew them great regard, and ſtudy a behaviour agreeable to them. But here, when compared with Divine Majeſty and perfection, the greateſt and worthieſt of mortals, vaniſh, as it were, into nothing. Can it be then, that an ingenuous mind, attentive to the preſence of this matchleſs Being, will venture upon any action, or even indulge any thought, which he knows is diſpleaſing, and a manifeſt indignity to him? Will not ſuch a one ſtudy that kind of temper and behaviour which is dutiful towards God, and ſhews a juſt regard to his perfect purity and perfection? God's eye is now upon me, will

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he ſay; what I am tempted to do is offenſive and diſpleaſing to him; and ſhall I be ſo loſt to all ſenſe of decency, and ingenuity, as to proceed to ſuch an action? No ſurely, were there no puniſhments to be dreaded, a liberal mind poſſeſſed with ſentiments of true honour, would abhor it.

This will appear in a ſtronger light when it is conſidered, that thoſe very powers which men proſtitute to immorality of any kind, are all the gifts of God to them; and maintained and ſupported by him, according to the general laws of nature. So that, without God, we could do nothing, could poſſeſs nothing, could have no enjoyment of life; and is it not extremely unnatural, when we know we have our beings, and our powers, in God, to profane them to his diſhonour? The underſtandings, and ſagacity, which the cunning and treacherous employ in bringing to paſs their wicked devices, are the underſtandings which God has given them. The hands which are lifted up in a cruel, or otherwiſe wicked action, are the hands which he has made, and to which he gives power to act. That tongue which blaſphemes his name, has God given, as the peculiar glory of the human frame: And do men thus requite the Lord? abuſing his favours to the worſt purpoſes, and which are an impious offence againſt him? If we would

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soberly think on this, surely, it would beget SERM. an aversion against all wickedness, which must XV. then appear most disingenuous, and ungrateful. Nor can any man, one would think, persuaded of the truth of the divine existence, government, and presence with him, come to such a deliberate resolution as this, "notwithstanding I have my being in God, and all "my powers from him, and tho' his eye is "this moment upon me, yet I will gratify "my present evil desire, though it be to his "dishonour, and that I know it will displease "him; and no sense of decency, of duty, or "gratitude to him, shall hinder me." Could any man entertain such a thought? How much less could he express himself so? And yet this is, in reality, the true language of every presumptuous sin which men, who are not quite infidels, commit; I do not mean that they have it, in this manner, in their thoughts; or are capable of setting God so deliberately at defiance; but the action is the same as if they did; and is, in truth, a violation of all the rules of decency, gratitude, and duty.

However, if ingenuous principles have no power over the mind, let men still consider, how they hurt themselves in breaking the laws of God. They have their existence in him; are perfectly at his disposal; have no strength

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at all to resist him; nor is there any power in the universe which may deliver out of his hand: How dreadful then the state of men when God is angry; when he awakes to avenge his injured honour! *If I lift up my glittering sword, and my hand taketh hold of vengeance, I will render a recompence to mine enemies, a reward to them who hate me.* Consider how dreadful are the appearances of Divine Majesty, even in this world; and how awful his judgements of sword, famine, and pestilence! How many thousands do these devour! How dreadful did God appear, when he commanded that deluge which overwhelmed the world, one righteous man and his family excepted! These judgments shew, that there may be great seeming severity in the Divine administration; and that goodness in God, though most perfect, is yet consistent with his inflicting grievous punishment upon the wicked. Nay indeed it requires this, as a thing necessary for the good of the creation, that great Whole, which is constantly under the Divine care. In this we may rest assured, that God will inflexibly do what perfect wisdom and goodness require. In him that weakness of compassion by which good, but imperfect minds, are often betrayed into wrong actions, can have no place. How deeply ought this to be considered by bad men!

men! Let the terrors of God alarm them. No man fully knows what a load of miſery he is heaping up for himſelf, by an immoral courſe of life. God has aſſured us he will puniſh. This we are clearly taught in the Holy Scriptures; the language of which is perfectly agreeable to that of our own conſciences: But the degree of puniſhment who can tell? And without doubt, *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!* To have him for an enemy, whoſe look makes the earth to tremble; before whom *the everlaſting mountains are ſcattered!* SERM. XV.

But, on the other hand, that God is ever preſent with us, that *in him we live, and move, and have our beings*, gives the nobleſt encouragement to the practice of virtue. This is the proper method of expreſſing our reverence and regard to the Divine Majeſty; virtue alone has that true decorum and propriety in it, which will be pleaſing to the ſovereign judge. And all profeſſions of love and regard to him, without it, are perfectly hypocritical, and will be an abomination to him. We know alſo, that as this is the only way, ſo is it the certain way of pleaſing him. He delights in the righteous; a conſideration that muſt be of the utmoſt weight with honeſt and liberal minds, who cannot do the abominable thing which God hates; and will

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be a great incentive, in their doing of that which is good. Such is the natural uſe of the powers which God gives, and which he every moment maintains. Herein lies that pleaſing order and harmony, which is the glory of the moral world. And ſurely we can never appear in a more amiable and delightful view to the Divine eye, than when we not only act from good principles, and in purſuance of the laws of our nature, by doing that which is right; but above all, when we feel ſuch ſteady attachment to it; ſuch a ſincere love to God, and reſolution to pleaſe him, as no temptations can overcome. So that any loſs will be ſuſtained, any pains and ſeverities of ſelf-denial endured, rather than we will endure to do what is offenſive to God. How pleaſing to him the internal conflicts of virtuous men with the remains of corrupt paſſion, and moral infirmity, and all their victories over them! It was the obſervation of an antient moraliſt, that eminent virtue ſtruggling with misfortune, and going through the trials of it with decency, and firmneſs, was an object ſo excellent, as to entertain even the Gods themſelves. This is true, with reſpect not only to the conflicts of virtue with external calamity, but with our own irregular affections and paſſions, and with the ſpirit of this world: Sincerely approving

proving itſelf in reſiſting, and overcoming theſe, is the nobleſt ſacrifice we can offer to God; who in ſuch a caſe, will behold us with a pleaſed countenance. What invincible reſolution may this give to the believing mind! SERM. XV.

Beſides, what conſolation to think, that he *in whom we live and move and have our being*, as he perfectly knows our ſincere attachments to virtue, will be ever preſent to aſſiſt us! He can give us moſt effectual aid, and he certainly will do it, according to his gracious promiſes: So that, in purſuing the great ends of virtue, we are ſure we ſhall happily ſucceed. Of this reality of the Divine aſſiſtance, and of its conſiſtency with the frame of our natures, I ſpoke, in the preceding diſcourſe; and ſhall not now inſiſt upon it. Doubtleſs it is a moſt pleaſing reflection, that in doing ſincerely that which is good, we have the preſent aid of that original Being, in whom we live and move; who gave us our powers, and can ſtrengthen them to every good work. Who, as he governs the world, and nature in all its parts, according to general laws, eſtabliſhed for the good of the whole, to which they are abſolutely neceſſary; ſo can he, at the ſame time, conſiſtently with theſe laws, take care of every individual; and interpoſe, as it becomes neceſſary, to aid us by his power,

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in ſerving the true ends and purpoſes of human life. Many there be who ſpend their time and ſtrength, for very vanity; purſuing what they can never obtain; or, if they could obtain it, what can contribute very little to true happineſs. While they, who *by a patient continuance in well doing, ſeek for glory, honour, and immortality*, are ſure of ſucceſs; for God is with them, and their ſucceſs will abundantly anſwer their expectation. Happineſs, of the nobleſt kind, will be their reward. Thrice happy, to have theſe principles ſo impreſſed upon our minds, as to be ever preſent to them! to feel the power of them, in determining us in the whole conduct of life! This would make all go well. But alas! how often do we think, and ſpeak, without feeling! and while we aſſent to the truth, ſhew, at the ſame time, that it has little power over us! this is our reproach, and great unhappineſs.

Laſtly, let us learn from what we moſt aſſuredly know, and believe, concerning our living and having our exiſtence in God, to be meekly ſubmiſſive to all the conduct of his Providence towards us. We know that we are ever under his eye, and that *he performeth the things appointed for us*: This is a moſt ſubſtantial reaſon for our being reſigned in all events. Thoſe miſtaken men who labour to baniſh

baniſh the notion of a ſuperintending parti- SERM. cular Providence out of the world, as they XV. are apt to run into the wildeſt ſpeculations, ſo, one would think their minds muſt be in a moſt unſettled, and uneaſy ſtate. A blind fate, which is without counſel: or chance, of which no rational account can be given, and which is indeed rather a word without any meaning; is what ſuch men, in effect, ſubſtitute in the room of that glorious Being who made, and who governs all things. At leaſt, when good counſel is not ſuppoſed to prevail in the univerſe, nor any worthy end to be purſued; all muſt appear as a vaſt heap of confuſion; as the ſhadow of death, without any order. There is then no peaceful reſt for the mind, on occaſions of danger and diſtreſs; the proſpect into futurity, even with reſpect to the greateſt and moſt important concerns, is clouded with uncertainty; and there is no ſubſtantial ſupport, under the preſſure of preſent evil. How much more rationally, and more to the ſatisfaction of the mind, do they think, who believe that the univerſe is the work of a mind perfectly wiſe, powerful, and good; who is ever preſent to all its parts, ſuſtaining and governing the whole; and who, having originally formed a deſign worthy of the inconceivable greatneſs of the architect, and of the work, is conſtantly, by the general

laws

SERM. XV. laws of nature, and the particular diſpenſations of Providence, carrying this deſign into execution. The preſence, and providence, of this perfectly wiſe and good Being, is the ſure foundation of peace and tranquillity to the mind. And while we truly believe that he governs all, reſignation of ſpirit will appear to be perfectly rational, a moſt amiable, a moſt important virtue.

How abſurd muſt it be, when a man is convinced of his abſolute dependence upon God, whoſe power is always irreſiſtable, to ſet himſelf as it were in oppoſition to the meaſure of the Divine adminiſtration, and to the courſe of Providence by which events are determined: And, while he can do nothing effectual in oppoſition to them, how wretchedly abſurd, to ſhew the reſtiveneſs of his ſpirit in murmurs, and the various expreſſions of diſcontent. Is this like reaſon, though duty and intereſt were not at all concerned in the caſe? *The potſherds of the earth* contending with him who made them; it is like oppoſing our feeble breath to a tempeſt; or ſetting ourſelves to reſiſt the lightnings of heaven. Vain attempts, which ſhew the diſtractions of a diſquieted ſpirit, but can never anſwer any good end! How much wiſer is it, with quiet ſpirits to bear what we cannot alter; and to ſubmit unreluctant, when neceſſity is laid upon

upon us! Thus the burthen becomes much eaſier, to which a diſpoſition to murmur and repine, is always a great additional weight. SERM. XV.

Thus far, however, the point of prudence only is conſidered: but what we are principally to attend to is, our duty. We owe to the Creator and Lord of all, an unreſerved ſubmiſſion; not becauſe we are his creatures only, or principally; but becauſe we are ſure he governs the world, and the affairs of it, with perfect wiſdom and goodneſs. Now, under his adminiſtration we may conſider ourſelves either as individuals, under his care, and having our ſtate or lot appointed by him; or, as being related to one great whole, the true intereſt of which he is carrying on; and in which there may be certain relations and dependencies of parts, which make it neceſſary for him to appoint events affecting certain individuals, which events, but for theſe relations, and their connexion with the whole, would not come to paſs.

There is no difficulty in conceiving, for it evidently appears to be fact in many inſtances, that what may be neceſſary for the good of a ſyſtem, or whole, may be apparently hurtful to individuals. Now, when theſe individuals know that the inſtances in which they ſuffer are really for the good of the whole; and that infinite wiſdom would otherwiſe never have

appointed

Serm. XV. appointed them; this greatly tends to quiet the mind, and make it eaſy. Such men know, and are ſure, that their ſufferings do not proceed from any malevolence in the Supreme Ruler; but come to paſs in ſuch a courſe of things as the moſt perfect wiſdom has contrived: and muſt own, that if the adminiſtration of things were in their own hands, and their hearts ſet upon that which is the greateſt good on the whole, they would have conducted affairs juſt in the ſame manner as now they are. It is true, the ſelfiſh ſpirit may be apt to reply to this, what is the good of the whole to me? What comfort is it, that in my ſufferings other creatures find their account? To which it may be anſwered, that hardly any man can be ſo ſelfiſh as not to make a great difference between that evil to him, which a public intereſt makes neceſſary, and that which is ſuppoſed to be the fruit of ill-will to himſelf; he muſt ſee that there is reaſon for his being patient of the one, when yet he would moſt keenly reſent the other. But there is a much more ſubſtantial conſideration prepared for virtuous minds, and which intirely removes the difficulty: Such do know that virtue is the moſt excellent thing in the creation of God, and that the happineſs reſulting from it is the greateſt, and moſt ſatisfying: Conſequently, whatever

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ſchemes infinite wiſdom and goodneſs have framed, muſt be always, upon the whole, friendly to virtue; and it is never to be imagined that the Divine Mind ſhould appoint a courſe of things, in which the moſt excellent thing of all, and the moſt neceſſary to happineſs, ſhould be neglected, or finally ſuffer. And, therefore, the worthy and virtuous who are ſufferers in thoſe things which Providence appoints for the greater public good, have reaſon to believe that, in the final iſſue, thoſe very things ſhall iſſue to their advantage. But farther, when we conſider ourſelves as individuals, and in a ſtate of diſcipline, we may eaſily ſee very good reaſons why adverſity is appointed for us; we may often ſee a neceſſity of it; and are perhaps, in our own particular caſe, very ſenſible of great advantages accruing from it. The God who gives us all the good which is fit and neceſſary for us, will permit no more evil than what is thus fit. And as experience ſhews that very afflicting diſpenſations have been really to our advantage, in the paſt ſtages of life; we have good reaſon to think that there is the ſame gracious and friendly intention, in thoſe which we now ſuffer. Here then is a ſure foundation laid for tranquillity of ſpirit, for ſatisfaction with the adminiſtration of Providence. And from ſuch principles, we ſee there

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SERM. XV. there is wiſdom, and decency, and duty, in a meek reſignation of heart to the will of God.

The truth is, when we conſider that by his Providence things come to paſs, that he is perfectly wiſe and gracious, and that he regards the intereſts of every individual as a part of the great whole; then, ſurely, the murmuring ſpirit ſhould become quite aſhamed, and out of countenance; ſtill more, if there be any piety of affection, and dutiful ſentiments, nay even wiſdom and regard to decency; the language of the heart muſt be, *it is the Lord, let him do what ſeemeth him good.* For he never will, never can, do any thing which is not fit to be done. And not to be ſatisfied with this, ſpeaks a moſt unnatural ſtate of the mind.

To conclude, let us ever bear in mind the preſence of God with us, and our dependence upon him. You ſee this will not only prove very comfortable, but very uſeful to us. Poſſibly, nothing has more impaired the religion of the preſent age, than inattention to God, and to the duty we owe him. Some men placing the whole of religion in morality, in the confined ſenſe of that word, as only ſignifying honeſty in their tranſactions with mankind, charity to the diſtreſſed, and the private virtues of temperance, and the like,

which

which are no doubt of the utmost importance; SERM.
but at the same time making light of the ex- XVI.
ercises of piety, as of very little moment. It is a plausible reason which some men have been heard to give for this, that our services cannot profit our Maker; and that all the design of them is to make us honest and good. Be it so; yet still are not those exercises of piety, which are the natural and proper expressions of our love to God, as much according to the law of our nature, as any other duty? Can any thing be more obviously incumbent upon us, than the love of God, dutiful submission to him, and all the proper expressions of these, in our behaviour? We cannot profit our Maker, it is true. What then, are we not to love him, and obey him? And is not this to be shewn in that manner which is proper, and natural, in all our behaviour and actions?

After all, it must be owned that the greatest reason for the service of God, in acts of piety, is that it will certainly prove the most effectual security of our virtue. Piety greatly tends to preserve upon the mind, a sense and awe of the Divine Presence; and to give men a purity of taste which makes them abhorrent of all immoral acts. Nay more, there is something in the exercises of piety, which admirably raises and enlarges the heart,

SERM. XV. weans it from the love of this world, begets heavenly desires, and fills the mind with a joy which is pure and unfading. These are surely valuable purposes; and it is time enough to become indifferent about religious exercises, and acts of devotion to God, when we know these purposes are perfectly served. But, in truth, if they ever are really so, it must be by our having attained to a temper perfect in the love of God, and charity; and when that is the case, devotion to God will be so far from being neglected, that it will become the principal enjoyment of life: By love to God, men will be naturally, and most certainly determined, to all those services in which they have communion with him. And, on the contrary, we may most certainly conclude, that where men are negligent of their Creator, and of his service, their temper and moral state must be very imperfect; and that the love of God doth not in truth reign in them.

SERMON

SERMON XVI.

What is imported in keeping the heart, and the beſt means of doing it.

PROV. IV. 23.

Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the iſſues of life.

WHAT conſtitutes our ſupreme good, or chief happineſs, is the moſt material of all inquiries; and according to the ſentiments of men concerning this ſubject, the whole of life will naturally be regulated. We find ourſelves in a ſtate in which we are liberally furniſhed with means of external comforts and enjoyments; in theſe we find pleaſure, and we know that our Creator intended this pleaſure for us, to ſweeten life, and render it agreeable. He has alſo contrived a variety in it, that ſo in all the di-

SERM. XVI.

verſity of temper and taſte which is ſeen in mankind, each individual may find what is agreeable to himſelf. The pleaſures which are firſt taſted conſiſt in the gratification of the appetites and deſires of animal nature: By degrees men become ſenſible, and this very ſoon, that according to the preſent ſtate and eſtabliſhed relations of things, they cannot have this gratification but by means of their poſſeſſing ſo much (which they can call their own) as may be equal to the purchaſe of it. Hence the deſire of acquiring, and poſſeſſing, naturally ſprings up in the mind; although I cannot ſay that this deſire is intirely owing to a ſenſe of exigency and need, and to the reflections of the mind upon this; for indeed it ſeems to be an appetite originally planted in nature, ſuitable, as all the other appetites and inſtincts are, to the preſent ſtate of nature; and which, like them, prevents reaſoning and reflection; at leaſt this is evidently fact, that in many, ſuch deſire is ſtrong, and that to a very vicious degree, even when they have actually in poſſeſſion all that heart could wiſh; and does often ſo prevail, as to make the mere poſſeſſion of much, rather than the enjoyment of what men do poſſeſs, their greateſt felicity. But there are likewiſe pleaſures of another ſort, and more manly, in fame, in power, in authority, and

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in those improvements of life which knowledge and learning yield: And these, especially the last, are, by all generous minds, much preferred before the gratifications of sensual desire, and mere animal nature. Still it is certain, that men may attain to very high degrees in all these things, now mentioned, and yet be very imperfect in their moral characters; nay, in a great measure void of virtue. But at the same time it will be acknowledged by all, that virtue has its pleasures, and affords a real felicity; which many, whatever they may profess in words, do not seem to think is of the most substantial kind; while others do indeed esteem it far above all other things. Now, whether it is really worthy of such estimation, is a point that every man must settle in his own mind. However, to such as really believe this, their way in life lies clear before them; they are with constant care to cultivate the virtuous and good affections; and, so far as they can, to make all the business of life, all events and circumstances in it, subservient to their improvement in such affections. And to such it will appear to be the most important of all concernments, that *they keep their hearts with all diligence*, seeing *out of them are the issues of life*, and of that happiness which is their chief good. SERM. XVI.

SERM. XVI. Every man is in a good measure directed by the light of nature, what affections and desires are good and virtuous; as also, when they become evil, by being irregular. Especially such as enjoy revelation, and are well instructed in the religion of Christ, they cannot fail of having an idea of a certain moral character, a certain state of the affections, which it is the design of all the discipline of our present state to bring men to; in which character virtue is completed, and from whence the highest happiness we can enjoy in this life, arises; such also must be sensible, if they attend carefully to their own hearts, in what instances they come short of this character; and by what particular amendments of life these defects are to be supplied.

But as all the actions of life, good or bad, are the fruits of the present prevailing temper, so it is evident, that, in the reformation of life, our labour and application ought to be directed to the regulation of the temper principally, and the state of the affections. For when, by indulging to the desires and passions an unrestrained licence, they become corrupt and vicious, when the heart becomes the impure and loathsome source of evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, falsewitness, blasphemies, and such other vices, it will require great and most resolved, and constant

constant application, indeed the assistance of a higher power than our own, to conquer such vicious habits, and to restore the heart from a state so ruinous to its natural moral dignity. This is so great a thing, that in the Holy Scriptures it is represented as a new creation, as a resurrection from the dead, as the renewal of the spirit; however, there are means and methods pointed out to us by nature, as well as revelation, which we are encouraged to hope, will, in the sincere and diligent use of them, prove effectual. SERM. XVI.

But if men have been so happy as by the influence of early religious impressions made on their minds, and of a good and virtuous education, to have in a great measure escaped the pollution which is in the world through lust; or if they have, by the power of conscience, and of the religion of Christ, been recovered from wicked courses of life, and a corrupted state of the spirit; still they are to consider themselves, while they are in this world, and beset with manifold temptations, as in danger of being led astray, and of suffering in their temper and moral character; so that a careful attention, to the heart, and affections, is necessary. And as this is the most effectual preservative of our integrity, so it is the most effectual means of making progress

SERM. XVI. in virtue. It becomes, and moſt highly concerns us, *to keep our hearts with all diligence, for as much as out of them are the iſſues of life.*

In diſcourſing upon which words, I ſhall, firſt, make a few ſuch obſervations upon the keeping of the heart, as may contribute to explain the meaning of it.

Secondly, I ſhall lay before you the moſt effectual helps to our doing this with ſucceſs.

Thirdly, Recommend and urge it from the conſideration Sólomon ſuggeſts, that out of the heart are the iſſues of life.

Firſt, I am to make ſome obſervations which may contribute to explain the meaning of the precept in the text.

We need not, it ſhould ſeem, be told that we are each of us endowed with a power of reflecting upon our own deſires and affections, and with a certain invariable ſtandard within us, by which we are enabled to judge whether theſe inward principles are right or wrong. Nor ſhould we need to be told, that our affections and paſſions are in a great meaſure under the influence of conſcience, and of the ſuperior calm principles; and inſtincts, by which it was intended they ſhould be controled. Theſe things are obvious; as alſo that we are anſwerable to the Creator and judge of all, for our affections as well as actions;

tions; and that conſequently, it is our buſi- SERM.
neſs always to attend to the ſtate of our affec- XVI.
tions; and to make the regulating them aright our principal care. We are *to keep our hearts with all diligence*, or, as the phraſe is ſtrictly engliſhed, to keep them above all keeping; to be concerned for nothing elſe as much.

A great variety of affections enter into our frame, as the conſtituent parts of human nature. And from what particular affection or paſſion is it, that we are not in danger of ſuffering in our integrity, if the workings of it are not attended to, and the exorbitancies of it reſtrained? ſo that the mental eye ought to be every where, and all the paſſions carefully obſerved. Eſpecially, this will appear to be neceſſary, when it is conſidered, that inclination and deſire have a moſt powerful influence, to darken the mind, to ſet things in a partial and falſe light; by this means impoſing upon us, and betraying us into what is wrong, under deluſive colours. Againſt this deceit we ought to be moſt carefully guarded; and without a conſtant watch over, and jealouſy of ourſelves, without a careful and impartial inquiry into the real quality and tendency of our diſpoſitions and deſires, we are not prepared to keep our hearts with any ſucceſs. Now, to

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answer this intention, and fulfil it, it is not enough that we reſiſt thoſe motions of our hearts which are clearly perceived to be corrupt and evil; but moreover there muſt be pains taken, that we may not be *hardened by the deceitfulneſs of ſin*. If for inſtance, a man indulges covetouſneſs under the notion of frugality; or pride under that of greatneſs of mind; or vicious luxury, as innocent gratification, or commendable generoſity; however he may be pure in his own eyes, yet he keeps his heart to very little purpoſe. This ought to be much conſidered by us; as we ſee many inſtances in which men thus deceive themſelves; and it is much if we have not found ſuch dangerous deceptions in our own caſe. The very notion of keeping the heart implies in it, that we know what is right, and what is wrong; but ſurely our knowledge of this, in general, is of little uſe, unleſs we are capable of applying it to our own affections in particular, and of judging rightly concerning them.

It may be farther obſerved, that in the ſtate of our affections, conſidered with reſpect to the purpoſes of morality, we may err as much from the weakneſs or utter deficiency of one, as from the vehemence and exorbitance of another. Affections are intended to be

be ſprings of action in us. Now, on ſuppo- Serm.
ſition that we have an affection which is good XVII.
in ſome given degree, but have it not in ſuch
a degree as to become a ſpring of action; to
all the good intents and purpoſes of human
life, and of our acceptance with God, this is
as if he had it not at all; for in theſe reſpects,
that *is* not in reality, which does not at all
anſwer the end. A man, ſuppoſe, loves his
country; but yet loves it not to that degree
as to do any thing laborious, any thing that
will be detrimental to his private intereſt, for
the ſake of it—He loves the cauſe of religion
and virtue; but he will not ſuffer any thing
for them—He ſympathizes with the poor
and miſerable, ſo far as to wiſh them well;
but he will give them nothing of his ſubſtance
—kind words, *be thou warmed, be thou filled*,
are all they have to expect. Surely therefore,
the keeping of the heart muſt imply in it
that we be careful, by all proper means, to
ſtrengthen and cultivate thoſe affections which
are found weak and defective in degree; for
by this we may ſuffer in our moral ſtate and
character, as much as by the overgrown
ſtrength and vehemence of other paſſions.
Eſpecially this will appear to be of great mo-
ment, when it is conſidered, that many of
our affections are not only of different but of
oppoſite

SERM. XVI. oppoſite tendencies; heavenly deſire, for example, and inclination to the good things of this life, to temporal poſſeſſions; private affection or ſelf love, and benevolence, or regard to the public good. Theſe are all planted in the heart, and they are neceſſary in our frame, at leaſt in the preſent ſtate of things. *The fleſh luſteth againſt the ſpirit, and the ſpirit againſt the fleſh, and theſe are contrary the one to the other.* They are ſet, in reality, like antagoniſt muſcles in the body. When one of theſe latter comes paralytic, and has loſt its power, the other appears to have gained the ſtrength which it had loſt; and ſo the part comes to be diſtorted, which while the juſt proportion of the oppoſite powers was maintained, continued in its proper form. Juſt ſo, when any of the antagoniſt affections, ſo to ſpeak, is weak and has loſt its power, the oppoſite affection carries all before it without reſiſtance: thus will ſelf-love act in the man who has not benevolence, and regard to a public in him, in ſuch a degree as to become a principle of action; and ſo alſo will inclination to this earth, and the enjoyments of our preſent ſtate, in that character in whom the love of God, and heavenly deſire, are not in ſuch ſtrength as to controul it. Hence then it is as neceſſary that we ſhould give all diligence

diligence in ſtrengthening good affections, which are culpably weak and defective, as in reſtraining ſuch as are boiſterous and vehement: And a little attention will ſhew where our application of this ſort is moſt needed. SERM. XVI.

Farther, the irregularity of our affections is owing either to a ſtrong natural propenſity, or to ſuch as has been acquired by habit; ſo that it works without any ſtimulus or provocation from without; or elſe ſuch irregular affection is owing to our converſing with external objects which powerfully excite them. Now, certainly, if we mean to keep the heart with ſucceſs, we muſt carefully avoid ſuch objects as are apt to excite paſſions in us which are irregular, and ſo become dangerous temptations. For example, who that intends to maintain the purity of his taſte, and the integrity and tranquillity of his ſpirit, will not carefully avoid the filthy converſation of the wicked and profligate, and all the occaſions of evil which it miniſters? Who that is conſcious to himſelf of inclinations to intemperance, but will avoid the ſociety of drunkards, and all occaſions of riot and debauchery? And ſo in all other inſtances. A paſſion which appears to be laid aſleep may be quickly awakened; and a very ſmall ſpark, a very inconſiderable occaſion, may enflame paſſions and make them ungovernable.

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ungovernable. For this reaſon, it muſt be always accounted a principal part of religious prudence, to avoid temptations, and all the occaſions in which our integrity may ſuffer: Nor will any man maintain the purity of his heart, and the regularity of his paſſions, who neglects this rule. Yet how often are men ſeen to ruſh into ſnares, to act as if they were courting temptations, and wanted trials of their own ſtrength? This will never fail of proving pernicious.

But where there is a ſtrong natural propenſity, or which has been acquired by habit, the greateſt fortitude is neceſſary; and a conſtant attention to reſiſt the workings of paſſion, and to bear it down. A great many familiar inſtances may be given of this; in the fearful, for example, or the paſſionate, or the proud, and ambitious. Where a particular paſſion has the aſcendant in the conſtitution, it is always giving trouble; it does not need a juncture of circumſtances to raiſe it to an enflamed degree, (as is the caſe with reſpect to thoſe paſſions which have not ſuch a natural aſcendant) but exerts its power in a conſtant tendency, even when there are no remarkable provocations from preſent external objects. And as it is a great advantage for a man to know himſelf in this reſpect, what

what paſſions are predominant, and where he is moſt expoſed; ſo here a conſtant watchfulneſs is required, the greateſt fortitude, and hardieſt reſolution to bear them down. Serm. XVI.

And this, my brethren, brings us to the main thing in the buſineſs of keeping the heart. What are we called to watch over it for, and to obſerve all its workings, but that we may oppoſe all its corrupt tendencies? Without this, our keeping the heart, ſo far as that means only looking into its motions, ſignifies juſt nothing. All that are really virtuous muſt know, from their own experience, that in this ſelf-diſcipline the great labour of a virtuous life does indeed lie. Here are the internal conflicts and victories of virtuous reſolution, and conſcience; which are concealed from the world, but perfectly known to God, and highly pleaſing to him. Decency of life and regularity of manners, ſo far at leaſt as to be free from groſs crimes, and public blame, are but a ſmall thing when compared with that diſcipline and care, by which the heart is kept in a proper frame and temper, and the affections in a ſtate of regularity. He is the man of worth, he only is truly ſo, who can hazard an appeal to the Searcher of hearts, that he does not indulge any vicious affection within him, but makes it his conſtant

Serm. XVI. ſtant buſineſs to purify the heart. He too is the happy perſon, and will enjoy the pleaſures of virtue in the higheſt reliſhes of them, who knows in experience, that by the powers of conſcience, and religion, he has ſubdued all evil deſires, and rejoices in a freedom from the bonds in which it held him. When the wrathful are become of a meek temper; the proud and ambitious, humble; the worldly minded, liberal in their diſpoſitions, and heavenly; this is the conqueſt which of all others is the moſt glorious, and in which the ingenuous find greateſt ſatisfaction.

I have only to add farther, that the great duty recommended in my text muſt be underſtood to ſignify that we ſhould watch over, and reſiſt the firſt workings of paſſion, the conceptions of luſt, as the apoſtle James terms them---*Luſt when it hath conceived bringeth forth ſin.* All men know the difference between the firſt motions of paſſion, and the ſtrength it obtains by indulgence in the mind. Many of the paſſions are indeed like fire in this reſpect, that from a very ſmall beginning they grow to a very great flame. I ſpeak now of the workings of them upon particular occaſions---*Behold how great a matter a little fire kindles!* The truth is, the firſt motions and excitations of paſſion and deſire, when the proper

proper objects are preſented, ſeem not at all in our power, at the time; nor are they therefore at all culpable, more than the deſire of eating in him who is hungry. But when by undue indulgence they become irregular, here is our fault; and when they are not ſo controled as to prevent not only the commiſſion of ſin, but the ſubverſion of the mind's tranquillity and compoſure. And it is known to every man from his own experience, that a little application on the firſt appearances of paſſion, would have been effectual to quell it; whereas, by indulgence it gathers ſuch ſtrength, as hardly to admit of any controul. The great art is to reſiſt the beginnings of evil; and then to apply the powers of reaſon and conſcience, when paſſion is yet but weak, and beginning to work its pernicious effects---to try if we cannot bear it down; to divert the mind from the object intirely, which if it can be done, will effectually anſwer the end; and which, upon ſome occaſions, is known to be the only effectual means of anſwering it. This is all I ſhall ſay for explaining the duty of keeping our hearts, and ſo proceed to

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The ſecond head of diſcourſe, namely, to lay before you the moſt effectual helps for our doing this with ſucceſs.

And

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And here, in the first place, we are to turn our thoughts to our Creator. Frequent and serious contemplation of his perfections, and of the relation in which we stand to him, is undoubtedly the most effectual of all means, in forming the heart to goodness; indeed so effectual, that I will venture to say, no one has applied it diligently, without success. When once we have attained just apprehensions concerning God, that infinite universally present mind, who according to the rules of most perfect wisdom and goodness governs the universe; we are so made that we cannot possibly, with attention, survey this matchless excellence without admiration and the utmost esteem. What can appear more glorious to the mind, than perfect wisdom, and perfect goodness, in eternal conjunction? Now, when we go on to consider this Being as our Creator, that we are not only related to him as the creatures of his power, but the subjects of his moral government, and so constituted that we are capable of attaining to a character which renders us amiable in his eye; and on the contrary, that we may so behave as to become the objects of his indignation; it is not possible that we should not desire his approbation, and to be in favour with him; even suppose we were to feel no painful

painful apprehenſions of ſuffering by his anger, when a bad temper and conduct expoſe us to it. SERM. XVI.

Beſides, there is in ſuch greatneſs, purity, and goodneſs, what ſtrikes the mind with an ingenuous awe and fear of offending; an awe not ſervile, ariſing from the dread of puniſhment, but which is a moſt glorious and worthy affection, obtaining moſt in the very beſt ſpirits: It is expreſſed in ſcripture by *fearing the Lord and his goodneſs:* The meaning of which we ſhall beſt underſtand, when we reflect how we are affected in the preſence of a perſon of diſtinguiſhed worth, and converſing with him; with what care we avoid every thing that may be offenſive to him; and to behave ſo, in our words and actions, as to be agreeable: And all this, not from any apprehenſion he would hurt us, ſhould we act otherwiſe; but from a ſenſe of the reverence due to ſuch ſuperior worth, and the diſingenuity there muſt be in doing any thing which is an indignity to it. Now, if thus we reverence, and ſtand in awe of ſuperior dignity, and worth, in our fellow-creatures; how much more muſt this affection prevail in the minds of the ingenuous, when the great original infinite excellence is the object of it? What muſt any man, not quite abandoned, think of himſelf, when his conſcience tells him that his courſe of life is ſet in

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opposition to, is a continued war with, the most perfect wisdom and most perfect love? that he is doing constant indignity to the greatest possible excellence, the greatest possible grace? But there is indeed an awe of another sort, which strikes the mind in the contemplation of God. He is our Lawgiver and Sovereign, he will bring us into judgement for the deeds we shall have done in the body; and as he will amply reward the righteous, so he will not fail to punish the workers of iniquity; and with what severity, who can tell?

All these things, it is true, may be known and believed by men, without making any good impressions on their minds, at least such as are lasting; but when men set themselves to think seriously, and call upon their minds to give close attention, when they repeat these sentiments over and over in their thoughts, and give them scope enough there, it will be a very extraordinary thing if their hearts are not affected. A vivid sense of God upon the mind, will have powerful influence---*I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee:* that is, I have quite another sense of thy greatness and perfection than before, *and I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.* If then we would endeavour to rectify what is amiss in the state of our affections,

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ſections, let us apply ourſelves to this knowledge of God; and in this we ſhall learn virtue. To know him is life everlaſting; to know him, ſo as to imitate his perfections. Let us then frequently, and with deep attention, contemplate theſe perfections. Let us be inſtant in prayer and ſupplication to him. Let us think and act as always in his preſence; as having our inmoſt hearts conſtantly open to him. Surely to ſuch habits of pious meditation, and of prayer, vicious affections will at length give way; and diſpoſitions that are good and worthy, will be ſtrengthened by them. As reaſon may convince the unpractiſed, and unexperienced, of the truth of this; ſo experience beſt proves, to ſuch as have tried it, that nothing does ſo effectually contribute to bring the mind into a proper ſtate, as the exerciſes of true piety. Nor is it leſs certain, that negligence of God is that which gives ſtrength to corrupt affections; and a looſe to the mind, by which it is laid open to all temptations, and to all evil. This indeed is the more to be taken notice of, that it ſeems to be the great and growing diſtemper of the preſent age; and ſurely a moſt threatening one to the ſtate of religion; which is not likely to mend with us, till a greater regard is ſhewn to the Being who made us; until men apply, with more dili-

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gence, to the exercises of piety and devotion; which are not only, as you have seen, a natural and proper means of suppressing bad dispositions, and strengthening good affections, but the appointed means of our deriving light and life from the Father of lights; and of procuring those assistances which will prove effectual. *For if men that are evil, know how to give good gifts to their children, much more will our heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to them who ask him.* Let us ask then, that we may receive; let us seek that we may find; let us knock that it may be opened to us.

The second thing I would recommend as a means of keeping the heart, is a virtuous industry. No one observation made upon human life, is more just, than that idleness is the mother of mischief. We are formed for action; and when the powers are not employed in something worthy, they are likely enough to find employment of another sort. To do just nothing, is painful, of which men soon become impatient. Accordingly, we see that when they are not called to labour, by the necessity of their circumstances, they are apt to find out diversions for themselves; many of which are not a little laborious, perhaps more so in some instances, than the toils of the poor in earning his daily bread.

But

But when recreations, however laborious, are quite innocent, men are ſafe in purſuing them, ſo far as is conſiſtent with their performing certain offices of life incumbent upon all, in all circumſtances. It is quite otherwiſe when they give themſelves up to diverſions, which are either, in ſome reſpects, really unlawful, or which have a tendency to diſſipate and corrupt the mind; ſtill much worſe is it, when their vacant hours are given to the purſuit of vice. But what I am mainly to inſiſt on, is this, that if men are vacant from all thought and employment worthy of them, the mind thus quite unbended, as it will contract a diſlike to action, ſo it will lie open to all temptations; and to keep it in a proper temper will be found not only difficult, but indeed impracticable. When temptations are offered, the more impetuous, and turbulent paſſions, will immediately rage in the heart, and by habitual indolence, the powers of reſiſting and controling them, will be found in a great meaſure extinguiſhed. SERM. XVI.

When men are ſo given up to ſloth, that they have loſt the inclination to all other virtuous labours, much more will they be impatient, and indeed, incapable of that internal labour, which is neceſſary to reſtrain irregular luſts and paſſions; and which of all things requires the greateſt vigor and reſolution. In

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a word, the mind of the idle and ſlothful, as it lies open to the inroads of temptation, and the inſults of impure tumultuous paſſions, ſo it has loſt that internal ſpring, that vigour and activity, which is neceſſary to give a ſucceſsful reſiſtance and oppoſition to them. And, in reality, the powers of the body, and of animal life, do not ſuffer more by the habits of ſloth and indolence, than do the intellectual and moral powers; indeed, by means of theſe, both become good for little, both incapable of anſwering the true ends of life. Every one who has obſerved mankind, muſt have ſeen this exemplified in ſo many inſtances, that there can be no occaſion for a more particular illuſtration. The poor who are obliged to daily labour for the ſuſtenance of life, are very apt to complain, to think this a hard world, the adminiſtration we are under a ſevere one, and to envy thoſe who, by the poſſeſſion of a plentiful fortune, are placed above all ſuch neceſſity. But a ſerious view of human life, and the ſtate of the world, will ſatisfy us that there is great wiſdom, and great goodneſs too, in appointing labour for the children of men; it is rather a great bleſſing than a real evil. Happy had it been for many who appear in all the pride of an ample fortune, and in all the luxury which it makes them capable of ſupporting; happy had it been for them, if

they had been obliged to earn their bread with their own hands! They would in that caſe have, in all probability, been better men, and more uſeful; they would have had no ſuch guilt to anſwer for, as they have now contracted; and their labours might have been ſome way ſerviceable to the world.

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Let it therefore be recommended to us to avoid habits of ſloth, and indolence, and vacancy of thought; to apply ourſelves to action, in ſuch a meaſure as may preſerve the vigour and activity of the mind, and an aptitude for the beſt exerciſes. Few men can be at a loſs to find out employment for themſelves, as moſt are under a neceſſity of purſuing ſome buſineſs in life, for their own ſubſiſtence, and making proviſion for their offſpring. Diligence and activity in this buſineſs, is no ſmall virtue; indeed of great ſignificance; not only to the promoting a man's temporal intereſt (*it is the hand of the diligent which maketh rich*) but to the preſervation of innocence. A thouſand ſnares and temptations do the induſtrious eſcape, to which the idle and ſlothful are expoſed. Moreover, as life paſſeth on ſafely, ſo it is ſpent reputably, when men are with honeſt induſtry ſerving their generation, in the buſineſs of that ſtation wherein Providence hath placed them. But ſuppoſe men have the advantage of being, by an opu-

Serm. lent fortune, placed above all neceſſity of la-
XVI. bour, are they therefore to be idle? Are there no ſervices to a country, to a neighbourhood, to friends, in which they may be virtuouſly employed? May not the improvement of their minds, in knowledge, find ſufficient occupation for them? In the ſtudy of themſelves, of nature around them, of the various ſtate of nations in this world, and in the tranſactions of paſt ages, cannot they find buſineſs both very entertaining, and very profitable? Could any mortal ever ſay that he was forced to paſs his time in perfect indolence and inactivity, or that he could find no employment for himſelf? No ſurely; this can never be the caſe. It is not in circumſtances or ſtation that the cauſe of idleneſs is to be found, but in the temper. And to ſet the indecency and abſurdity of ſuch a life before us, ſo as to beget, in every good and generous mind, an utter abhorrence of it, there needs no more than a faithful hiſtory of it. A continued courſe of trifling, where the moſt important care is to murther time, where the moſt remarkable incidents of a man's life are his riſing at one hour, and lying down at another, his ſitting down to table at a third, and to gaming at a fourth; his appearing at places of public reſort, as a part of the ſhew, or

ſauntering

ſauntering, from place to place, without any Sarm.
purpoſe to ſerve, but that of empty ceremony XVI.
—Who that knows how to do juſtice to the dignity of human nature, can look into this without contempt and indignation? Surely the gifts of fortune were never given to men to make them leſs ſignificant than others; but to make them more ſo; and when they are excuſed by the indulgence of Providence from the labours of low life, in which others are obliged to toil, it becomes them to employ their time, and powers, in all the more generous ſervices to mankind and themſelves. When they do not ſo, they become a nuiſance; and high ſtation, and opulent fortune, become a ſnare and curſe to them. To conclude, of all the means of preſerving integrity and innocence, of keeping the heart in a proper ſtate, virtuous induſtry in buſineſs of ſome kind or other, is perhaps to be accounted the principal; as on the other hand, nothing can be more pernicious than ſloth and idleneſs.

Thirdly, we ſee that all men have a circle, leſſer or greater, of acquaintances, with whom they principally converſe: Some of them, thoſe with whom they are joined as members of domeſtic ſociety; others, whom the buſineſs and commerce of life, or near neighbourhood, render familiar to them.

Now,

Sect. XVI. Now, it is of very great importance that men choose such to be their intimate familiar acquaintances, as have a right temper, and a just taste in life; that their daily conversation may be such as will not only not endanger innocence and virtue, but contribute to the guarding and strengthening of them. There is a mighty power in conversation, in the behaviour of our familiar acquaintances, (especially if they are high in our esteem) to affect the mind, and to render us like them in temper. And indeed all social intercourse has influence one way or other; either in laying temptations and snares in our way, by such licentiousness as defiles the imagination; or by such a contrary strain, as tends to the encouragement of virtue; very rarely shall we find conversation so perfectly indifferent, but that it shall have a tendency to make the heart either better or worse. Surely a wise and good man will choose such for his familiars and intimates, as are like to mend and improve his temper, rather than to corrupt him. And it must be very grateful to a person of real worth, when he mixes in company and conversation, to be secure that he shall hear nothing tending to endanger his virtue, or hurt the temper of his mind; so that if conversation should not be improving, it will at least be innocent. Whosoever then would maintain

tain his integrity and a right temper, must Sect. XVI.
avoid the infectious breath of wicked company. It is true that with respect to certain relations in life, men have no opportunity of making a choice; but must be content with such as befal them: However, with respect to the circle of our voluntary familiar associates, the case is otherwise: in the choice of these, wisdom and virtue will shew themselves: Nor can any man be looked upon as a man of worth himself, who chooses to herd with the worthless and wicked. There is a licentiousness and impurity in the conversation of such, which is extremely offensive to men of confirmed virtue: and to such as are not so, extremely dangerous; especially to the young, and unthinking, and unpractised in the world. No misfortune can be as great, as their falling into the hands of the profligate and abandoned. Many unhappy creatures who, if left to themselves, would have proceeded successfully, yet, for want of firmness and resolution, have been ruined by the arts of those deceivers, who seem to pique themselves upon the destruction of youthful innocence, and glory in making it their prey --A spirit, of all others, the most diabolical; and who can say what such miscreants deserve? No acts of robbery, nay allow me to add, of murther, are so execrable as the ruining of innocence;

Serm. XVI.

nocence; in truth, men who ſet themſelves ſtudiouſly and induſtriouſly, to this, are the greateſt peſts in human ſociety. I have only to add under this head, that as men of good hearts, and who would make it their buſineſs to keep them ſo, will ſurely chooſe that company, in which their virtue and the purity of their taſte are not like to ſuffer, but to be confirmed rather; ſo it is one of the beſt and worthieſt offices we can do to one another, to encourage that ſtrain of converſation, which may be to the uſe of edifying; and which, as the apoſtle ſpeaks, may *miniſter grace to the hearers*. This is a matter which ſeems too much to be neglected. There is indeed an extreme that we ought carefully to avoid, namely, the obtruding diſcourſes upon grave ſubjects, on every occaſion, whether proper or not; which inſtead of doing good, only makes men ridiculous; but yet there are ways of dropping incidental hints, and of leading to ſubjects which may be uſeful, that are in no ſort affected, and will not prove offenſive. A perſon who has juſt and manly notions of virtue and religion, with but common diſcretion, will run no danger of erring in theſe points. But the mention of this is enough.

Laſtly, converſing much with the heart, obſerving the tendencies of the affections with care, and endeavouring to preſerve always a

juſt

juſt ſenſe of things upon the mind, will be found of the greateſt uſe. Luſts and evil affections bias the mind; they caſt miſts and darkneſs over it; and the very ſource of them lies in want of ſenſe and diſcernment. To acquire which, and ſo to preſerve, in the heart, *the candle of the Lord*, unclouded, nothing in our power can contribute ſo much, as frequent and ſerious communing with our own hearts. Taking the tendency of our deſires and inclinations to taſk with ſeverity; and examining the pretences under which the various gratifications of them are recommended. By ſuch a careful attention to ourſelves we will find out the *deceitfulneſs of ſin*, and thoſe ſnares which prejudice conceals from the unthinking; we ſhall be able to reſiſt temptations with firmneſs and reſolution; for in truth, the ſucceſs of them, where they do prevail, is in a great meaſure owing to careleſſneſs and inattention. SERM. XVI.

I ſhall, in concluſion, very briefly repreſent to you the argument, by which the preacher recommends to us the diligent keeping of our hearts; namely, that *out of them are the iſſues of life*. In a former diſcourſe I ſhewed you how out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murthers, adulteries, fornications, thefts, falſe-witneſs, blaſphemies; and the heart which is the ſource of theſe, is indeed the

ſource

SERM. XVI.

ſource of death: For wickedneſs and miſery are connected in the nature of things, as well as by the poſitive conſtitution of God, who will judge mankind according to their works, and has prepared tribulation, and anguiſh, for every ſoul of man who doth evil, without any reſpect of perſons. On the other hand, the heart which is full of love to God, and good affections, which is pure from vicious inclination, is a ſpring of the moſt laſting and ſatisfying happineſs. The good affections, naturally and neceſſarily, produce pleaſure and peace; they are indeed, when in proper ſtrength, the faireſt internal paradiſe. Beſides, as they are pleaſing to God, ſo he has promiſed to reward them; *The pure in heart ſhall be bleſſed, for they ſhall ſee God!* This is life, this is happineſs, in the higheſt and ſtrongeſt ſenſe of that word! Infinite then ſhall our gain be, in keeping the heart with diligence and ſucceſs; and if we are conſcious to ourſelves of the one, we may moſt aſſuredly promiſe ourſelves the other.

END of VOL. II.